00095775

00095775

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 20 February, 2020

THE HOME-BREAKERS

THE HOME-BREAKERS

An anti-militant suffragist novel
by a Popular and Well-known
Novelist who desires to remain
anonymous

The Home-Breakers

BY

A LOOKER-ON

95775
7

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT LIMITED
PATERNOSTER HOUSE, E.C.
1913

G. D.
HIS BOOK

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Rip Van Winkle	1
II.	Trying to understand	18
III.	A Little Light	35
IV.	The New Woman	50
V.	The Englishman's Home	66
VI.	In the Face of the County	82
VII.	Unquenchable Fires	100
VIII.	Another View	116
IX.	Paying the Price	134
X.	In the Dutch Garden	152
XI.	The Candidate	168
XII.	What is my Duty?	183
XIII.	Enter Julia Pratt	198
XIV.	The Bit Place	213
XV.	A Life for a Life	227
XVI.	The Aftermath	243
XVII.	Too Late	257
XVIII.	The Mask off	272
XIX.	The Widening Gulf	287
XX.	Love triumphant	302
XXI.	G. D. intervenes	316
XXII.	The Verdict	329

THE HOME-BREAKERS

CHAPTER I

RIP VAN WINKLE

GIFFARD had been out of England for eleven years.

A big slice out of a man's life in any age or time; in the twentieth century and in England that period represented a chasm which it would be difficult to bridge.

Giffard, however, was cheerfully unconscious of any chasm as he waited, though without visible sign of the impatience which was gnawing at the vitals of his fellow-passengers, until the great liner should be docked and his foot should once more press the soil of his native land.

The Cunard Company's landing-stage at Liverpool is not a conspicuously cheerful spot in the raw of an English spring morning, and Giffard was fully conscious of its chill. He had spent the last eleven years without a break worth mentioning—

certainly without a visit home—in the steamy heat of a tropical station on the outpost of Empire.

At least it had been an outpost when he went, though, thanks largely to him, it had now crept nearer the heart of things. To put it correctly, he had pushed farther east and created other outposts which were even more remote and where existence for the white man was even more difficult.

He had survived the things that kill other men: he had risen triumphantly out of deadly fevers, had recovered from the effects of the rifle-shot of treachery, and had shaken off the clutch of the jungle; and his hairbreadth escapes, if recorded, would have filled a book. These experiences had left him lean and brown and hard as nails, and his looks were undeniable. He was a distinguished son of a distinguished country, and his name was one more added to the long list of those who had made good.

And now he was arriving home on a furlough of indefinite length, to receive, presumably, the thanks of a grateful country and to accept some service worthier of his ability and achievement.

A man in such a position has reason for pride, and even for a sort of complacent self-consciousness, but Giffard was singularly free from both.

He belonged, if not to a race of heroes, at least to a hard-headed North country family who believed in deeds rather than words. His grandfather had been a distinguished soldier, though

his own father had been in holy orders. He had an only sister, to whom he was hastening with an odd emotion tingling at his heart. The eleven years had taken toll from Giffard's meagre list of home ties: his widowed mother had been dead now for four years, and he and Elinor were orphans.

He had pressed his sister to come out to Lotali then, assuring her that there were other five white women there and that the climate was pretty tolerable. But, in a long letter, full of vague allusions to her desire to live her own life, Elinor had declined the invitation. She had removed from the Yorkshire village in which their early home was situated to London, to share a flat with a friend, and she seemed to be interested in Movements.

But Movements, unless they affect Governmental ideas and principles, are not of poignant interest in Lotali. Giffard, so long cut off from participation in home affairs, had ceased to take a very active concern in them, and his letters from England were very few.

Of late Elinor had written with less and less frequency. But surely she would be at the Liverpool landing-stage! He had written rather an imploring letter asking her to come, for, somehow, he dreaded the idea of a lonely landing and the sight of the reunions in which he could take no part.

He had a big heart allied to a hard head and a sound judgment—a combination admittedly rare in men of his class. It is the fashion to portray the average empire-builder as a sphinx-like creature, without bowels of compassion, who rides a Juggernaut car over the bodies of the poor native wretches who bar British progress. Doubtless there is such a type, but there is also a higher one which is at the foundation—nay, is the very essence—of British supremacy.

The story of the stand Giffard had made for his principles does not concern this history, though it had left its mark on him. Against prejudice, misunderstanding, lying, and misrepresentation he had fought and conquered. The result was a colossal strength with a mingling of sweetness which made his personality very winning.

He had travelled by a roundabout way home, because he wished to see New York and a tried Lotali friend who had his home there. So his clothes were of American cut, if his tongue was not, and on board he had been set down as one of the better class Americans coming to England for the season.

The *Mauretania* was crammed with them from stem to stern. They seemed to Giffard a new type, and he had not yet got over his surprise at the fresh facts concerning English life that he was learning every day. He had made a good many casual friends among the passengers, for,

though he did not talk very much, his words were worth listening to; but he had not in the six brief days of the voyage come across anyone likely to become a permanent friend.

Now, at the last moments, when disembarkation was about to begin, his sense of loneliness was accentuated by the busy haste of his fellow-passengers, whose one desire was to get off the boat and hustle to the waiting train. He had not much personal luggage—just what would lift in both hands. A big case, containing the few curios he had picked up in the course of his long exile, had been sent to England direct by freight boat and presumably had arrived before him.

There was a crowd waiting—almost like an army of ants, so small they looked from the giddy height of the *Mauretania's* saloon deck, but there was nobody there corresponding to Giffard's idea of his sister.

He had tried to prepare himself for the change that eleven years must of necessity have wrought in a woman's appearance. When he had said good-bye she had been little more than a tearful school-girl, tall and lanky, yet with a sort of shy grace, a round, pink-cheeked face, and big pathetic eyes with curling lashes which would one day doubtless be a man's undoing. Even then she was young for her years. Giffard had counted often, and he realized that now she must be thirty-one. He

himself was thirty-five, and he looked his full age, his hair even being slightly tinged with grey at the temples.

It was a great thing that Elinor had never married, and he had visions of a new sweet comradeship, even of the building of an English home, over which she would preside. They would have to learn to know each other again possibly, but the tie of kinship would count, and perhaps the barrier of the intervening years would be leaped in a moment!

All these happy anticipations, however, were disappointed by the undeniable fact that Elinor was not there to meet him. There was not even a telegraphic message, bidding him welcome, though there had been dozens brought on board by the pilot and laid on the table in the saloon. Excited as a boy, he had scanned these rows of little red envelopes, but the name of Giffard was rendered conspicuous by its absence.

Not without a certain spice of philosophy in his composition, Giffard did not fume over the inevitable, but gathered up his traps, and, slipping down the gangway, set his foot firmly on English soil.

If conscious of no thrill as he did so, he was honestly glad. He had had his fill of alien shores, and these low grey skies with the wind-clouds scudding across them gave him a delicious sense of joy.

How he had loathed the copper brilliance of these eastern heavens! How he had longed in the burning days and breathless nights for the low, grey skies, the mists, the familiar chill of an English summer!

He made the journey to London alone, that is to say, in one corner of a packed compartment in which he did not know a single soul.

In the course of it he took from his pocket the last letter which he had received from Elinor, bearing a date thirteen months back. There might, of course, have been a later one posted; but, if so, owing to his erratic movements as his life in Lotali drew to a close, he had not received it. This one, however, contained the address, which was the main thing. He conned it until he knew it by heart—113, Dorrington Mansions, Marylebone Road.

Before he reached Euston he decided to drop his baggage into the cloak-room and take a hansom to the flat in order to make sure that Elinor was actually there. By the time he had done that it was four o'clock in the afternoon, and the rain was falling heavily.

Although Giffard had been no stranger to London traffic in the old days, and although he had so recently sampled the hurly-burly of New York, it seemed to him that the Euston Road was a perfect pandemonium of noise and confusion.

The familiar hansom had almost disappeared.

A taxi-cab waited his convenience, but its progress along the Euston Road and into Marylebone was very slow. The big, red monsters which Londoners had taken to their hearts instead of the good old trundling bus, seemed to dominate the traffic and incidentally to imperil more lives than they carried in safety.

Giffard was fascinated by it all. The lure of London stole like rare wine into his veins once more, causing his pulses to vibrate, his heart to beat quicker, his spirits to rise. After all, this was life! Here, at the very heart of things, must be found the goal worth striving for and grasping with eager hands.

The immense block of flats, with the address of which the driver seemed perfectly familiar, was not, strictly speaking, in the Marylebone Road, but in a little cul-de-sac opening off.

The number was found without difficulty, and Giffard dismissed his taxi, agreeably surprised at the lightness of his liability for the use of the same.

As he stepped through the open doorway, a polite commissionaire immediately came out of his mahogany box with its glass front to answer his queries.

"Miss Giffard, sir? No, she ain't 'ere," he said with a broad and slightly significant grin.

"Do you mean that she isn't in the house, or that she is out of London?" asked Giffard with a touch of impatience.

"It cuts both ways, sir," answered the man civilly, but the smile still worked about his massive mouth. "Both the lidies is in 'Olloway."

"What's that?" asked Giffard in a startled voice.

"'Olloway Gaol, sir," said the man with rather a helpless expression. "They are Suffragits—been in the window-breakin' brigade. But I believes Miss Desmond shied a stone through Lyd George's winder. I 'eard so. Anyways, they've got six weeks."

"Oh!" said Giffard, and his lips shut together with an odd snap which had the effect of altering his whole facial expression. "Do you happen to know how long they have been in Holloway?" he recovered himself sufficiently to ask.

"Lemme see. This is the third week, I think. Oh, I remember the date, cos it was my missus's birthday. It were the seventeenth of March. Lor', what a batch of 'em went in that week!—over a 'undred!"

Giffard felt tempted to ask for further information from the porter, but some inward feeling of reticence and pride forbade him.

He presented the man with sixpence and walked out of the door.

He could hardly have analysed, much less described, his state of mind. The thing he had just heard was so unexpected, so unthinkable, so altogether abominable that he couldn't realize

it. He had read about the Suffrage Movement of course, and he had likewise heard it discussed in more or less lurid language on board ship; but, somehow, it had never come home to his bosom. He had regarded it, indeed, as something in the nature of a joke. That it had assumed such gargantuan proportions, that it was already dominating so much of English life, above all, that it should have become a thing of personal and pressing moment to himself, seemed incredible.

He was brought up sharply in his aimless perambulation of the Marylebone Road by the reflection that he was a homeless man, and that it would be necessary for him to find some shelter for the night.

He climbed on to a motor omnibus for the first time in his life, and he was swiftly borne back to Euston, where he secured his baggage, and then to another taxi-driver he gave the address—Morley's Hotel.

He quite expected to hear that that old-fashioned hostel of solid English comfort had been swallowed up in the general *débâcle* of the old order of things, but the stolid face of the man did not change as he remarked "Right, sir," and proceeded to wind the crank of his engine.

"Morley's" still occupied its commanding corner of Trafalgar Square, and within its hospitable doors Giffard received suitable welcome, which somewhat soothed his ruffled feelings.

A room facing the square was assigned to him on the second floor, and, after he had disposed of a few things in the drawers and cupboards, he sat down at the window to have a smoke.

It was not a very merry home-coming for one who deserved so well of his country, and he asked himself blankly what he was going to do with the desert of leisure stretching in front.

He had nobody to share it with, nowhere to go, though in his pocket-book he held the addresses of several men whom he had promised to look up in England. These did not occur to his mind at the moment, however, as he was in too sick and sorry a mood to court further adventure, which would probably, he believed, merely add to his disappointment.

Soon after six the fact was forced upon his mind that he was hungry and that he wanted his dinner. A sandwich and a cup of railway coffee had sustained his inner man all day. He got into a very shabby dinner-jacket suit—the very one which he had purchased for five guineas ready-made at a City tailor's before he left England, and which had only been worn on rare occasions in the interval.

Thus attired, feeling more comfortable, and having recovered a trifle of his self-respect, he descended to the dining-room just before seven o'clock. He was surprised to find it fairly well filled at such an early hour, chiefly by men—a

circumstance which also relieved him. For the moment he had lost his interest in women.

A waiter hastened to find him a place.

"Sorry there isn't an empty table, sir. We're rather full this evening. Will this do?"

"This" was a table for two set in one of the windows, at which one diner was already half through his fish—a tall, fair man, quite young, but a trifle inclined to fullness of figure.

"It'll do," said Giffard curtly, though in his present mood he would have preferred solitude.

The fair man gave him a cheerful nod as he sat down, and Giffard responded. But it was about ten minutes thereafter before they began to talk.

"Good old place this," said the stranger. "My people have been coming here for generations. My governor brought me here first when I was a little chap at the Prep. to see the Eton and Harrow match. We belong to the North—to be quite frank and accurate, to Crayham in Lancs. My name's Howorth."

"Mine is Giffard. Just home from the East African Protectorate. Been out nearly a dozen years. Lord, what changes! I don't get the hang of them yet," answered Giffard, rather drawn by the frank boyishness of his *vis-à-vis*, about whom there was something "open, gener s, and strong."

"But you've been home in the interval?"

Giffard vigorously shook his head.

"Not once."

"Surely that's unusual?"

"It's true. I don't know why. Two or three times I've been getting ready, and then something else happened at the critical moment—something nobody could do but me, don't you know? So I stopped and did it. But I'm beginning to think a man can remain out of England too long."

"I've always heard so. And most chaps who serve in the East get their innings in the way of furlough. But why do you say that in such a dismal voice?" asked Howorth with his gay, winning smile.

"Because I am a bit hipped, I suppose," answered Giffard gloomily.

"Found some unexpected changes among your people?" said Howorth sympathetically.

"I haven't any people," was Giffard's answer on the spur of the moment.

"Oh, sorry!" said Howorth, and he dropped his eyes, not thinking it decent to seem to notice the bitterness which had sprung into the quiet, keen, compelling grey ones opposite.

"We're North-country folk," said Giffard. "My father was a clergyman, though we have come of a race of soldiers. We had a little place not far from Newark. My mother's dead since I've been away, and my sister——"

"Married, I expect?" put in Howorth cheerfully.

"No; not married. At the present moment she's in Holloway Gaol," said Giffard deliberately, though half an hour ago he might have said quite truly that wild horses would not draw from him the shameful truth!

Howorth whistled.

"Suffragette!" he murmured with uplifted brows.

Giffard declined the entrée offered at his elbow, asked a cut from the joint, and, while it was being brought, leaned his elbows on the table and looked straight across at his companion's face.

"I'll be mightily obliged to you, sir, if you can throw some light on this damnable business."

"I don't know that I can throw much light, that is to say, if it's an explanation you want. I can tell you what's happening, though. This disease is all over the land. I don't believe there's a house in England, big or small, that isn't affected by it."

"But how did it begin? What's the object of it? Why wasn't it stopped?"

"How did it begin?" A sort of rueful smile curved Howorth's pleasant mouth. "I'd like to say, 'Ask me another,' but I won't. Nobody seems to know. It goes back a goodish bit, of course—to John Stuart Mill, and Mary Woolstonecraft, and Harriet Martineau, and that lot. My mater—she's of the old school and a very plain, blunt Scotch woman—attributes everything to the

spread of education. She says education is a mistake for most people, but is essentially and wholly so for women. She bases her contention on the assumption that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Yes—she lays everything to the door of the present system of education; and, though she's the soul of generosity, she always kicks at paying the school rates."

"She's a ratepayer, then?"

"A widow—and we live together. It would give me uncommon pleasure to see you at Crayham. The place is rather pretty, and the mills might interest you."

"Thanks, awfully. Well, what's the object of the Movement? That's what they call it, don't they?"

"They call it everything under heaven, but their war-cry is 'Votes for Women'; and that's the best answer I can give you."

"But what do they want a vote for? Heavens, what is it? What privilege would it confer? What is it going to give in exchange for—for Holloway Gaol?"

"Freedom. That's what the women are out after," said Howorth more gravely than he had yet spoken. "And with a good many women that means licence. I'm in partnership with my cousin Adam Howorth—as good a chap as ever drew the breath of life. He's about ten years older than me. It was his grandfather who founded

the business. He married a High School girl. She was a medallist, and she's cram-full of University honours, thoroughly capable, and charming to behold; but she has got it badly. She leaves her three little children at Besley Grange with their father and the servants to look after them, and spouts all over the country. She has been in Holloway four times."

"Heavens!" said Giffard, and he sat back rather noisily on his chair. "And can't he stop it?"

"How can he, short of using personal violence and shutting her up? I'm sorry for old Adam. And I tell you, Giffard, that sort of thing is making the present generation of men afraid to marry. When they talk of race suicide they should get at the root cause. How is it you come to be so staggered over it?" he inquired when Giffard did not speak for a moment. "Haven't you had letters and papers from home?"

"Very few. We never were a writing family, and after my mother died, my sister seemed to drop off somehow."

"Didn't she ever mention the Suffrage business?"

"Oh, yes. But it didn't appeal to me, you know, and I used to shirk the bits dealing with it. I thought it merely a fad an unmarried girl was amusing herself with. As for the newspapers, when a man has been out of England so long as I

have been, his interest in home affairs slackens. I was always up to the hilt in business at Lotali. I worked like any Trojan."

"But you look fit on it—as hard as nails, I should say," remarked Howorth cheerfully.

"I am fit enough. But this has hipped me. I went out to my sister's flat, expecting a welcome and a bit of home to be waiting for me, and I was met with this! It's damnable, Mr. Howorth—damnable!"

Howorth solemnly acquiesced, and for the next few moments conversation flagged.

CHAPTER II

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND

"AT least one has to admit that they have the courage of their convictions," observed Howorth with the air of a man trying to advance some extenuating circumstance to account for a desperate situation.

Giffard replied curtly:

"It's a kind of courage we could very well dispense with. I suppose that, unless the fine is paid in court, they have to go through with the whole sentence."

"Not necessarily. Sometimes it is paid afterwards by some desperate or quixotic friend of the prisoner. My cousin has taken his wife out twice, and he got no thanks for doing that. The second time he did it, only because the baby was ill and he was afraid it might die before its mother got home."

"Good heavens!" cried Giffard in a shocked voice. "Do you mean to say that there are women who would do such a thing—leave a child of tender years without care while they go to prison for—for that?"

Howorth faintly and enigmatically smiled.

"When they're properly obsessed—as Diana is—they stick at nothing. When the worst happens they say that men are to blame because women haven't the vote. That was all that Diana said when she got home to Adam that night."

"She can't care for him or their children, then. There's a screw loose somewhere," said Giffard, going back in thought to his old home in the Yorkshire Hills which was the shrine of all his holiest memories.

"Oh, she cares after a fashion," answered Howorth. "Sounds queer, I know, but you'll have to wait and see—as the Prime Minister says. You'll find you'll have to adjust your focus a bit to take in the whole range of vision as presented by English life at the present moment."

"That is evident. Well, I'll be much obliged to you, if you can tell me how to set about getting my sister's release. I never had much knowledge of the law."

"You'd take some time to get the hang of it now in certain directions! They've had to make some new laws to fit the case. There's one operating now, called the 'Cat and Mouse' Act. Heard of it, I suppose?"

"I've seen allusions to it. But I tell you, Mr. Howorth, I didn't feel sufficiently interested in the thing to make any study of it."

"Oh, but you can't get away from it here—none of us can," observed Howorth cheerfully.

"It's our daily bread. The 'Cat and Mouse' Act has been framed to get the better of the Hunger-strikers—the women, you know, who won't eat or drink in prison and who have to be let out in case they should die. Under it they're watched all the time they are out, and directly they are fit to get about—back they go! They reckon it will take eighteen or nineteen years for Mrs. Pankhurst to get through the sentence she has just got at the rate at which she is doing it at present."

Giffard looked the disgust he felt.

"I suppose you don't know—but there! you can't! I was only wondering whether my sister might have come under the operation of the Act you speak of."

"I don't know. I don't remember her name as that of one of the leaders. But, of course, she may have taken another name. A good many of them do. You want to know how to get her out? Was she charged at Vine Street?"

"You forget—I don't know anything! I only want to get her out, because I may not have long leave. The Colonial Office may soon have another job for me, and, as things are, the sooner they have, the better I shall be pleased."

Howorth proceeded to explain to the best of his ability the process of releasing a prisoner against her knowledge or will, and he offered to accompany his new friend to Vine Street next day.

They spent the rest of the evening together; dropped in at the Empire for an hour, where they

had the privilege of witnessing a very broad skit on the very Act which they had been discussing. The whole affair made Giffard's gorge rise, and he would not stop to see the play out.

No difficulties were placed in Giffard's way at the police station where he explained his business. He obtained all the particulars he desired, and he learned that both his sister and her friend Louise Desmond had been sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment and that of this term they had served only three weeks.

Having paid the fines of both, and having been informed of the hour of their release, he presented himself in the immediate vicinity of Holloway Gaol about four o'clock in the afternoon of the second day, leaving the taxi-cab at a little distance away in order that no time should be lost after the prisoners appeared.

Acutely sensitive and secretly ashamed, Giffard was surprised to find that nobody paid the smallest heed to him. The casual comings and goings of the sufferers for the Cause of the Women's Movement had ceased to interest Parkhurst Road, unless, as happened sometimes, a fighting contingent congregated with banners and drums to escort their leaders when the gates should clang behind them on their return to freedom.

About ten minutes past four the inner gate swung back and Giffard beheld two women emerge, whom he watched narrowly as they came slowly and with

evident reluctance across the outer court-yard. During the few seconds in which he had the opportunity, himself quite unobserved, of studying their faces, he mentally decided that he would not have recognized Elinor in either of the women, unless he had been prepared to see her.

She had grown taller, she was shockingly thin, and her features were sharply attenuated, and were of that peculiar clayey colour noticeable in those who have been excluded from fresh air. In her deep eyes burned a strange fire.

To his relief, there was absolutely nothing bizarre or abnormal about her clothes. A coat and skirt of blue serge, a small, neat hat with a pheasant's wing, immaculate gloves and shoes proclaimed the correct taste of the gentlewoman at heart on the side of law and order.

Her companion, however, was a more striking-looking figure. She was very small and slight, was exquisitely formed, and had a little, childlike face of arresting beauty. She wore what, for lack of a better term, is sometimes called artistic clothes. A long, loose wrap of brown frieze which, when it blew open in a sudden gust of wind, revealed a flame-coloured lining, a brown velvet toque, set at a bewitching angle on her hair of living gold, expressed an unusual personality. She, too, looked pinched and wan, but the pallor of her face was relieved by a hectic touch on the cheeks which gave it a look of unearthly beauty.

The two of them were talking animatedly, and Miss Desmond's hands were never for a moment still. Giffard surmised that they were discussing the mystery of their release.

Immediately they came to the open gateway on the street, Elinor observed and recognized her brother. Her face became paler, if that were possible; then a painful flush succeeded, while something like apprehension leaped into her eyes.

Just for the brief fraction of a second she was a coward.

For that tall, dignified figure with the fine but undoubtedly grim face embodied the old order of thought and action—the very order against which she was in active revolt!

But there was something more. He was all the kin she had upon the face of the earth, and often, in the secret recesses of her soul, she had dreaded the day of meeting which had now come.

"Ted!—why, Ted, wherever have you sprung from?" she began bravely, and then quite suddenly she began to weep.

The sight was mightily disturbing to Giffard, who had all the Englishman's dread of emotional displays, especially in public.

Miss Desmond, perfectly aware of the hostility expressed in Giffard's eyes, slipped her small, bare hand through her companion's arm.

Giffard took no notice of the action.

"I have a taxi waiting across the way," he said.

"For heaven's sake, let us get into it before people begin to look!"

Then Louie Desmond smiled. It was a maddening sort of smile, which, somehow, raised in Giffard an unholy wrath. He even stood pointedly aside and allowed her, unaided, to climb into the taxi, though he was by nature and habit the most courteous of men.

"I suppose it was you who paid the fines," said Miss Desmond the moment they started forward. "In your sister's case I can understand, but—but I am not in the least grateful, Mr. Giffard. It was sheer waste of money. Probably I shall be in again to-morrow."

Giffard slightly bowed with the air of a man only casually interested.

By this time Elinor had recovered herself, and she smiled across the narrow space into her brother's grim face.

"I'm most awfully glad to see you, Ted. I had no idea you would get here before next month. When did you arrive?" she said.

"On Tuesday afternoon. I went out to the flat, expecting to find you. Of course I was most frightfully disappointed not to see you at the landing-stage at Liverpool. I had wired from Queenstown."

"I am sorry, but of course I didn't get it."

Louie Desmond presently brought her gaze back from the whirling panorama of the Camden Road and looked attentively into Giffard's face.

Elinor was the dearest friend she had on earth. They had been like sisters for the past five years, and she had heard a good deal about this brother who had now returned from parts unknown and who, judging from his present expression and attitude, was going to be all that was most difficult in a man.

His arrival complicated the situation, of course, but Louie was not in the least dismayed. She was small, but her courage was colossal! Of no man under heaven did she stand in awe.

"We had our marching orders, Mr. Giffard. Don't look as if you'd like to swallow us up. If that is how you looked at your poor natives at Lotali, I wonder they didn't get a Special Commission to inquire into you!"

Giffard could not forbear a smile. She was so daring, so delicious, and yet so oddly child-like! He felt a curious softness beginning to creep about the heart that had felt so tight a minute ago.

"Marching humbug! I tell you this sort of thing has got to be stopped. I've come home to stop it, at least so far as my sister is concerned. Holloway!—Good heavens, it's enough to make dead folk turn in their graves and living ones wish they were there!"

"Where are we going to now, may I ask?" said Elinor rather quickly, feeling that it was absolutely necessary to turn the conversation.

"That's what I'd like to know," her brother

answered. "I'm stopping at Morley's. Do you want to be taken back to your flat?"

The two women exchanged glances.

"Not just at present. There won't be any food there. We had better go and have tea somewhere first, hadn't we, then, Louie? And we'll have to report ourselves at Clifford's Inn."

"We can get tea at Morley's as well as anywhere else," said Giffard as he put his head out of the window to direct the chauffeur.

An odd sort of silence fell on them as they approached Trafalgar Square, and, when the taxi drew up at the hotel door, Miss Desmond was the first to jump out.

"Look here, Elinor. You two don't want me hanging on to you to-day," she said quickly. "I'll go along to the Inn and report. Good-bye."

Neither the brother nor sister demurred, and she disappeared while Giffard was paying the man.

As they entered the hotel together, Howorth, who happened to be inquiring about a telegram at the office, saw and recognized them.

Giffard was conscious of the swift glance of curiosity and interest which Howorth cast upon his sister. He fancied he discerned surprise also in the glance, for there was nothing of the Militant Suffragette in Elinor's appearance, except perhaps in her pale, slightly strained looks.

He did not offer his new friend an introduction at the moment, but asked Elinor to ascend in the

lift to his room, where they could have tea served, as they must have a quiet place to talk in.

Elinor nodded, and they ascended to the second floor in silence after Giffard had given the order for tea.

The moment the door closed upon them, he put his back against it and looked at her straightly.

"In God's name, Elinor," he said, a trifle hoarsely, "what's the meaning of this?"

She drew off her gloves with a slight nervousness which she could not at the moment overcome. She had expected and had tried to prepare herself for this. But, somehow, the reality was worse than the imagining.

"I'm sorry it has happened like this, Ted," she said, biting her lips. "I mean, I wouldn't willingly have chosen to be in Holloway when you arrived."

"In Holloway when I arrived! But why Holloway at all? It's horrible, unthinkable, infamous!"

"No, no; not quite so bad as that! I assure you a number of quite nice women of unimpeachable respectability and even many of good family are quite pleased with Holloway—at least they are not ashamed to be there. The shame is altogether with the people who send them there."

"I don't want to discuss the ethics or other aspects of what you call the Movement," he said curtly. "I only want to know what on earth induced you to tack on to it. What, in Heaven's

name, was the vote or the lack of it going to do for you ? "

" Very little for me personally, of course. It was only because the possession of it matters so much to all the other women in the world and to the little children, Ted, that I joined the Cause. I was one of the sheltered ones. Now I'm out in the open, and it's because I know what life in the open is for women who can't help themselves that I am proud to have been in Holloway, since that is the only way in which we can show our sincerity."

She looked lovely at the moment—her beautiful figure proudly poised, her pretty head held high, her eyes glowing with an exalted resolve.

Giffard, compelled to an unwilling admiration, muttered something under his breath.

" I don't understand. What had gone wrong ? What was the matter with things ? When I left England women seemed all right. What has been sprung on them ?—what wrong that requires so much righting in such a short space of time ? "

" There was nothing *sprung*," she answered clearly. " Everything had been going on for centuries. It was only that women suddenly began to wake up to realization of all the things that mattered and that almost nobody cared about. A few women had always cared, and some of them had died caring, without being able to help much ; but their spirits are marching on with us. After you have been home a little while,

and faced this Movement with courage and without prejudice, you'll understand."

"I don't want to understand. All I know is that it's jolly hard lines on a poor beggar who has been almost done to death out there, and who looked forward to a bit of home to come back to—to this!"

She winced a little.

"I'd have prevented it, if I could, Ted. I didn't get myself locked up on purpose against your home-coming."

"I dreamed on that boat day after day of how I should find you in a little home, of what good old times we should have together, and of my being able perhaps to persuade you to go with me wherever they send me next. There are very few places now to which a white woman can't go."

"Abroad," murmured Elinor significantly. "But there are plenty of places at home."

A tap at the door relieved the tension of the situation, and they sat down to tea presently in slightly better mood.

"I want to hear about yourself, Ted. Try to forget about me for a bit, and tell me all I want to hear. Have you given up Lotali for good?"

"They can manage without me; but at the present moment I wish myself back."

"Oh, that feeling will pass. And are they going to find you something else—a Governorship, perhaps, after all you've done and all you've given up for them out there?"

"I saw them yesterday at the Colonial Office. They were jolly decent to me," he answered, feeling part of the old-time charm of his sister's manner creeping over him; soothing his ruffled feelings and alleviating his bitter disappointment.

"And so they ought to be. But this Government is the limit, Ted! Not a scrap of reliance is to be placed upon it for anything. The half of its members are perjured, and the other half invertebrate."

Giffard decided to change the subject.

"I say, Elinor, couldn't you get hold of your friend and bring her to dine here this evening? And we'd do a theatre after. You saw that chap in the hall as we came in? His name's Howorth —comes from a place called Crayham in Lancashire."

"We have a Mrs. Adam Howorth from Crayham —from Besley Grange—among us," said Elinor, with a gleam of vivid interest.

"Same family. She's his cousin's wife. They are both in the firm. Well, if you can get Miss Desmond, I'll take a box and ask Howorth to join us."

It was on the tip of Elinor's tongue to say that she ought to be engaged in a more serious business. But the appeal in her brother's eyes—a sort of inexplicable sadness which had never left them for the last forty-eight hours, and which had deepened in the last one—decided her to consent to his desire.

"I dare say there won't be anything special for us to do this evening. I'll go and hunt up Louie at the offices, and, if you remain here, I could 'phone in about twenty minutes."

"I'll be here," he answered. "You're under marching orders, then, and have to obey—ahem! —Headquarters like those in the regular Army?"

"Yes, of course. That's what people don't understand, Ted—that we are a regular army, fully equipped, and possessing the temper and determination of the best disciplined army in the world."

"Tell me more about Miss Desmond," said Giffard, feeling that it would be decidedly unwise to pursue this branch of the subject further.

"I've told you a lot about her in my letters, haven't I, Ted?"

"In none lately. Who is she, to begin with? If you ever told me that, I've forgotten," he said, with engaging frankness.

"She's Irish."

"I guessed as much from her looks and her name."

"Her father was rector of a God-forsaken parish somewhere in the south of Ireland, where the poverty and the misery of the people entered like iron into their souls. She's a revolutionist by birth and by instinct, and an artist by profession. She has made something of a name for herself, and she exhibits regularly in the Academy."

"But Holloway, I imagine, will not be a very profitable adjunct to the studio."

Elinor admitted that it had interfered.

"She hasn't done anything this year, and she's most frightfully hard up—we both are," she said. "But we glory in it. It is only when one gives up all that one begins to live. I understand my *à Kempis* as I never did in the old days, and as poor mother, with all her study of it, never understood it."

Giffard pushed back his chair rather noisily and rose.

"I think that we had better not drag mother into the arena. This sort of thing, Elinor, would have killed her."

"Do you think it would? I don't. Probably she would have been with us, for, though she was always crucifying herself, she was quite well aware of the forces around her, and her being always rushed to meet them. She would have been with us, I am sure, Ted! In the last year I lived so close to her, and I know!"

The cold hostility visible in her brother's face convinced Elinor Giffard that the subject had better be dropped. She picked her gloves from the floor and began to draw them on.

"I'll run round to Louie, then. I'm awfully glad you're back, Ted," she added, a trifle unsteadily. "Try not to be so disappointed in me. I'm sure you won't be when you make study of

our Cause, and understand what it stands for. It stands for the best, Ted—the very best not only for women and little children, but for men as well."

He held open the door for her and, by his gesture, declined to discuss the question further.

Within half an hour the evening's outing was arranged, and Giffard, seeking Howorth in the smoking-room, found him more than willing to make one of the party.

A few minutes after seven the two ladies arrived at the hotel, and certainly Giffard, though in an acutely critical mood, had no fault to find either with their looks or their attire.

Elinor was entirely in black, relieved by an ermine tippet which had been her mother's and which her delicate colouring enabled her to wear with distinction. A string of pearls round her stately neck and in her bodice a rose, the petals of which half concealed the badge of the Union, completed a picture which Howorth found very attractive.

Her companion wore a wonderful robe of some green shimmering material which seemed to match her eyes and which showed up her fine colouring; and she was in the highest spirits. A little sprite of mischief seemed to be lurking in her eyes, and her merry laugh rang out like the tinkle of a bell.

They had quite a pleasant hour together, which all four would have wished prolonged, and the curtain had rung up by the time they took their places in the box.

The entire evening was a success, and Giffard was in much better spirits at its close.

"Now that you've seen my sister, Howorth," he observed, as they lingered over a last pipe, "can you tell me of any reason which you think could have induced her to join the Suffragettes?"

Howorth shook his handsome head.

"A year or two back I might have said that the women of the Movement joined it because they lacked an object in life, and that, if they were married, the thing would fizzle out. But that doesn't hold good with the new kind of women. Look at poor old Adam's wife! He's one of the best. Di has everything this world can offer, and the three kids are angels. Yet she prefers this! Something has gone wrong and rotten with them all, Giffard, and it'll need a Daniel to say what!"

Giffard took out his pipe and sat forward.

"To my certain knowledge, my sister has refused at least three good offers in her life. When I left home she was all but engaged to a chap in the Engineers. I never knew what went wrong there. But she has apparently put that sort of thing entirely outside her life."

"It's a shame, then," said Howorth, with more earnestness than the occasion seemed to warrant. "One wouldn't grudge their Cause the dowdies and the incapables, but when it comes to the best, like these two—and Di Howorth—oh, Lord!"

CHAPTER III

A LITTLE LIGHT

NEXT morning Giffard had an appointment at the Colonial Office which detained him till twelve o'clock, after which he went out to Dorrington Mansions to ask his sister out to lunch. When he came to the entrance hall, being unacquainted with the ways of notice-boards, he did not pause to inquire whether the one there gave him permission to go up, but at once took the stairs several steps at a bound to the fourth floor.

It grew lighter and airier with every upward step, but it was not the abode Giffard could associate with home-life. His memories were all of spreading walls and low-hanging eaves, where birds twittered and about which roses hung.

In these days it is men who cherish sentiment and keep it green in the heart of old England. The women would tell you they have sterner facts to face.

Giffard gave a smart double knock, and he was not kept waiting. He heard the sound of a quick

foot moving towards him from within, caught a shadow flitting across the obscured glass, and the door was opened, not by Elinor but by Louie Desmond.

Immediately his hat was off, and he smiled from his tall height on her small, eager, glowing face, which peeped from under some sort of turban.

"Oh! Oh, come in!" said his sister's friend with a little laugh. "I thought you 'were the baker! Elinor isn't in. I'm doing the chores. My! aren't there a lot of them to do! Dust lies thick in an empty house in London in three weeks! Think of the dust of centuries in places where it has never been disturbed till the woman's broom comes along!"

If it was a dig at his archaic attitude of yesterday towards the Women's Cause, it merely made him smile. It gave him such extraordinary pleasure to behold that piquant face and to have the opportunity of speaking a word with her alone that for the moment nothing else mattered.

"Yes—you may come right in. I mean it. Elinor has gone down town, and I've to meet her at two o'clock for lunch. I'm very nearly finished in the house, and I'll be glad to take a breathing space. You don't mind my pinny, I hope?" she said, as she laid her small brown hand against the blue calico apron which enveloped her whole frock. "It's one of my old painting things, but I haven't touched a brush for eight months. I hadn't any-

thing ready for the Academy this year. This is our living-room."

"It's very nice, and it's bigger than I expected," he said, looking round the pretty, artistic place with pleased eyes.

It was very obviously a woman's room, expressing the dual characteristics of the pair who occupied it. The brown walls and the water-colour sketches in dull frames and the coppers and bronzes proclaimed the artist, while the chintzes and the silk cushions and the books spoke of Elinor. Across one corner stood an old Dutch inlaid bureau, which he remembered in the rectory at Stoke Newark.

One of the copper bowls was full of tawny chrysanthemums.

"We both started to clear up this morning, because, though we are suffragists, we like to keep things 'decently and in order.' But about ten Mrs. Campion telephoned through for Elinor, and she had to go."

"Who's Mrs. Campion?" asked Giffard, as he sat down.

"Mrs. Campion! Don't you know?—why, she's of world-wide fame! She's one of our leaders—most of us think the one and only. Elinor and she are great pals. Mrs. Campion doesn't take me seriously, I regret to say."

"But you are pretty serious about this odd business, seeing that you go to Holloway for it," suggested Giffard.

She began to unpin the flame-coloured handkerchief from her pretty head and, smoothing it out over the blue pinafore, folded it neatly, untying all the knots with her deft brown fingers.

"I'm in it," she answered soberly. "But—but—I'm fed up."

She spoke the words rather desperately and nodded across the space between them defiantly.

Giffard felt a warm, comfortable sensation about his heart on hearing her confession. He refrained, however, from uttering the obvious platitude that he was glad to hear it, and, sitting forward, he gazed intently into her face, which, at the moment, looked both pathetic and childlike.

"Fact," she said, with another nod, "I'm not the stuff heroes and martyrs are made of. Elinor is. I squirm when a policeman grabs me, big, kind dears though most of them are. I am shaking all over when I have a stone in my muff, and I can't hunger-strike one little bit."

"Can Elinor?" he asked, flushing slightly.

"Elinor! Why, yes—she was doing it this time. I couldn't. They forcibly fed me once, and I gave in on the spot. I told Mrs. Campion she must just take the little I could be and do, and let me alone."

"But, yesterday, nobody would have thought you felt like that. Do you remember what you said about my paying the fines?"

"Oh, that was bluff! One had to say some-

thing; but I was glad, glad, glad that you had done it! I don't care who paid the fine so long as it was paid, and I'm not going back to Holloway."

She sat up defiantly, nodding, her bright eyes full of fire.

"Miss Desmond, since you are speaking frankly, perhaps you will tell me a few things that I want to know about my sister. I can't ask her, partly because we don't keep our tempers very well when this matter is under discussion, and partly because I should not, of course, get the whole truth from her. How long have you known her?"

"Only since she came to London. We met at Mrs. Campion's when she was Mrs. Delorme."

"I know that name surely!"

"Oh, yes, no doubt. She has been married for only a few months to her present husband, who is a barrister not much in sympathy with the Cause; but they were most frightfully in love with each other. She was unhappy with Delorme, and that drove her into public life. He was a brute."

"I knew a Campion—Dick Haversham Campion—an old Essex family. He was at Jesus with me."

"Big, plain man—awfully decent sort and most frightfully clever? They say, if he was in politics, he would be in the Cabinet. I dare say it is the same man."

"He was about my age," said Giffard. "Let me see, he must be about thirty-five by now."

"She can't be much younger. She had a son to Delorme, and I know that he is at Rugby."

"So that's what has happened to old Campion!" observed Giffard musingly. "Do they live in town?"

"They are supposed to live at Pennons, in Essex, and he goes down there every night. It's only thirty-five minutes from Liverpool Street. But Mrs. Campion kept her old flat in town. She lives there chiefly when she is out of Holloway."

"So?—and it was Mrs. Campion who got a hold of Elinor first."

"Yes. And Elinor is the sort of woman who goes in desperately for things. She doesn't know anything about half-measures, and she shrinks from nothing, however unpleasant. She's one of the buttresses of the Cause, and she speaks most awfully well. She always commands attention in Trafalgar Square, her voice is so beautiful."

"Do you mean that she holds forth in Trafalgar Square?" said Giffard, horrified.

"Why, of course. We all do. I've even done it, but the crowd just laughs at me. They say: 'Go it, little 'un! Who curled yer 'air last night?' Then I show them that it curls of itself. We have great fun, but I don't help the Cause much. I've got into the swim, however, and I suppose I'll never get out. I've lost most of my clients through it, and, as I take the Union's money, I've got to do their work."

"You take the Union's money?" repeated Giffard, in a mystified tone.

"Why, yes, of course. We have to be paid. So many of us are working women without other means of support. There isn't any difficulty about it. The War Chest is never empty! I get three pounds a week."

"And what do you do for it?"

"Whatever I am told. I go wherever they send me. My real function is to amuse the crowd. Somehow, I always put them in a good humour. I suppose it is because I am Irish. I see the comedy in it all! Half of the whole business is screamingly funny, and the other half tragic."

Giffard hesitated a moment before he spoke.

"It seems to me rather futile—the whole thing, I mean. And what do they suppose is going to supervene upon their getting the vote, supposing they do get it?—the millennium?"

Miss Desmond shrugged her shoulders.

"I'm afraid it will not make all the difference they expect, but surely"—here she dropped her head on her small hand, and her face took on rather a pathetic, child-like expression—"surely all this frightful hubbub and confusion and suffering won't go for nothing. That would indeed be too much."

Giffard was oddly touched by the words.

"Elinor does not appear to have any doubts," he said suggestively.

"If she has, she doesn't let them appear. She

is a splendid fighter, Mr. Giffard—the stuff of which leaders are made."

"But I don't know yet what they are out for," he said, with his engaging denseness. "What are the wrongs of women, anyway? Have they suddenly leaped into being while I have been away? I don't remember that there was any talk about them in the old days."

"They existed, though, only they were covered up," she answered shrewdly.

"Well, what are they?" he persisted. "If you can give me any first-hand information on this big, puzzling question, Miss Desmond, you will be doing me a real service. I want to understand. I hope I am neither a fool nor a pig-headed ass. I've been spending the last eleven years in trying to hold the scales of justice evenly, so that the weakest should not go to the wall. So you may take it for granted that I am open to conviction."

Louie Desmond's eyes glowed with quite open admiration.

"I wish Elinor could hear you," she said. "Haven't you talked to her like that?"

"She won't listen. She has started with the assumption that I am innately and irreconcilably hostile to the Movement, and she is so much on the defensive, bristling all over—don't you know?—like the fretful porcupine, that we don't get any forrarder."

"The Wrongs of Women!" repeated Louie

Desmond, as she clasped her small, nervous hands on her knees. "Now, what a chance! Well, there are some, don't you think, Mr. Giffard? There must be, seeing that there is an enormous number of people for whom there isn't any room in the world."

"Granted," said Giffard briefly. "And when they get the vote they are going to make the room —but how?"

She knitted her delicate brows perplexedly.

"There will have to be legislation, of course, to even up things."

"Granted again. But what is the suffragists' policy going to be? Unless they kill off the men who usurp the aforesaid room, I don't see how things are going to be mended."

"They expect that all questions affecting women and children—the hours of labour for working women and the conditions of child-labour, where it exists, for instance—will be more sympathetically discussed, that more humane legislation will result, and that there will be immense improvement," went on Louie tentatively.

"But surely these things come under the head of practical politics now," observed Giffard. "As far back as I can remember, politicians and philanthropists and social workers of every kind have been concerning themselves mightily about them."

"But they haven't done anything! Men don't

get further than talk, unless in regard to things which concern their own interests."

Giffard looked wholly unconvinced.

"I suppose that the women have some sort of organized policy and that when the vote comes they will act at once."

"Policy?" repeated Louie Desmond. "Oh, yes, they have a policy. But you must get Elinor—or Mrs. Campion, when you meet her—to expound it. I've told you I'm not one of the serious ones; and sometimes I get mortally sick of the whole thing! The other day we had a woman from Norway addressing us. She was very convincing, and, when one was listening to all she told us had happened in Norway through giving women the vote—the beautiful comradeship and understanding there seems to be between them and their men—one felt a sort of glow. Then somebody stood up and pointed out how widely the conditions of life in that little country differed from the conditions here, that they had not the same racial or labour problems to meet that we have, for instance, and then everything seemed hopelessly confused again. That's what's the matter with me, Mr. Giffard. My mind seems incapable of concentration, and just veers about with every new wind that blows. And what I'm afraid of is that that same condition is typical of the feminine mind in the mass. Women with splendid, big, forceful minds like Elinor's and Mrs. Campion's are in the minority—and always

will be, don't you think? That's what makes the whole question and outlook so difficult and uncertain!"

"You would possess the necessary firmness and concentration, I am sure, for the things that matter," said Giffard rather warmly.

"The things that matter!" repeated Louie with her slight, wistful smile. "But what are they? Nobody seems to know nowadays—women, least of all. Each of us has something that matters to us, and it is that we would fight and, if need be, die for. It is a purely personal thing—that is how and where we differ from men in the mass. Now, out there, in the East, it was big principles you were fighting for. Anybody could grasp them and sympathize. But here it is votes for women, and very few of us know what is going to happen after, or even what they stand for now!"

"Political equality," suggested Giffard, eager for a continuance of her vivid comment.

She was giving him, if not all the light he needed and sought, at least a wonderful glimpse into her own palpitating woman's heart.

She shrugged her shoulders and knit her level brows once more.

"Political fudge! That can't come, ever! For even the most advanced admit that a Women's Parliament would be no good. May I say one thing, Mr. Giffard, without being misunderstood? The one thing which really seems to me to matter

is that there should be equality regarding questions of morality between men and women, and that the same judgment should prevail for all. And even then the woman would have to pay something extra. There! What a solemn talk we have had, to be sure. Pray, forget all I have said."

"I shan't do that, Miss Desmond, I assure you, and I thank you very much."

"What for?" she asked half flippantly, and yet with a glance which arrested him.

"For the light you have given me. I understand things better than I did."

"I am afraid that Elinor would pronounce my poor light a mirage. Now I shall have to send you away, for I have to get dressed to lunch with Elinor. Did she tell you that she is to be speaking this evening at a meeting in the Kingsway Hall, in support of a resolution proposed by Mrs. Campion?"

Giffard shook his head.

"Kingsway Hall—where's that?"

Louie explained.

"If she didn't tell you, depend upon it she didn't want you to go to the meeting."

"But I shall go all the same, if you will be so kind as to tell me the hour?"

"The hour?—oh, about eight, I suppose. It will be quite half-past, you may be sure, before the serious business of the meeting commences. You understand that there has been a split in the ranks, and

that the militants are now very largely in the minority."

"I gathered as much, but it seems to me that, if the constitutional party is in the majority, it stands the best chance of ultimate success."

"Oh, that's what I think! And they have splendid women leading them—veterans like Mrs. Fawcett and Lady Frances Balfour. We've got splendid leaders too, but they've thrown everything except enthusiasm to the four winds of heaven, being convinced that nothing but enthusiasm and personal sacrifice will win the day. They're getting 'worse and worse," she said with a little shiver, "and the demands made on us are awful. Stop at nothing short of taking human life is the order from Headquarters!"

"And if you disobey?"

"Oh, we shall be put out, of course. Now, I've given the whole show utterly and entirely away; but I do want you to understand just where and how we stand. And it is because I happen to know that Elinor won't tell you that I have done it."

"I am for ever and unalterably your debtor," said Giffard, in rather full tones, and his lean brown face betrayed the emotion he felt.

"I was never in my life so sorry for anybody as I was for you at Holloway yesterday. It was because I felt it so awfully that I behaved like a little beast. I seemed to see right inside of you, and I knew what you were suffering. But don't go away

with the idea that Elinor didn't mind. She minded so awfully that she never so much as mentioned your name to me after we got home, nor did she do so even this morning."

Giffard had nothing to say in reply. The whole situation disturbed him profoundly, and the spectacle of this small woman-creature who had sacrificed her means of livelihood and who was now accepting money for the performance of certain duties in which she had no live interest seemed to him a strange and sardonic comment on cause and effect.

"I suppose you are thinking me a poor object—not worth anybody's powder and shot," she said with her smile of engaging frankness. "But I have tried to be honest Injun right through! I shall tell Elinor exactly what I have said to you."

"I can't thank you, and I won't venture to say what I think of you at the present moment," observed Giffard as he rose to go. "I hope we shall meet again soon and often. Meantime, do you happen to know the address of Campion's chambers?"

"I don't. But it would be the easiest thing in the world to telephone to Headquarters and get it from his wife. Shall I?"

"Oh, thank you, but I don't think I will trouble you. I can easily get it, I dare say, at any law stationer's in Chancery Lane. I'm going down that way anyhow."

"Very well. What a nice man that Mr. Howorth

is! We have a Mrs. Adam Howorth among us from Lancashire. I wonder if she is of the same family?"

"She is his cousin's wife."

Louie Desmond made a little *moue* as she preceded into the narrow hall.

"North, south, east, and west! We are spread like the sand of the sea for multitude, and only heaven knows what will be the end of it all. Good-bye, Mr. Giffard. I shall now court-martial myself, for I'm sure I've done the thing that I ought not to have done."

"You have at least made a lot of things plain to me, and I shall never forget it," he said with a warmth that the occasion scarcely seemed to warrant.

If Louie Desmond held the court-martial she most certainly did not return a verdict against herself.

She did not wish to recall a single word she had uttered.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW WOMAN

GIFFARD lunched at the Holborn Restaurant, where he took the opportunity of consulting the London Directory, without, however, finding the address which he sought.

Just after two o'clock he walked down Chancery Lane for the purpose of calling on the family lawyer, who was now the head of a well-known firm practising in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn, and from whom he fully expected to obtain Campion's address.

As he entered the low gateway of New Court he met a man full in the face—knocked against him, in fact—and both stopped to apologize.

"Dick Campion, by all that's wonderful!" he exclaimed joyfully. "Don't you know me, old chap?—Ted Giffard."

The man stepped back, apparently overcome with surprise, and the look on his face was one of incredulity.

"Why, Giffie, they told me you—you were dead!"

Giffard laughed cheerily.

"Perhaps I ought to be for my sins. Where are you going? Can I come with you?"

"Sure thing. I'm not doing anything particular—only getting up a brief; and I've just missed a man I particularly wanted to see. Come along. I'm in the Temple. But have you had lunch?"

"Just had it at the Holborn."

"I've abjured it. Since I've had to work so hard, I find the midday stodge fatal. Come along, old Giff. Well, this is a surprise! And it is really you! And looking fit, very fit you are! Why, what oceans of things you must have to tell me!"

"Oh, I don't know. I expect the boot's on the other leg. Things move slowly out there at the back of beyond. I suppose you've made good, but you look older——"

"I'll soon be on the wrong side of forty and putting on beef—worse luck," remarked Campion ruefully as he patted his shirt-front. "You're just the same long, lean beggar, and you have not a grey hair, I could wager, in your head!"

"Plenty of them. But you too, look fit and well—quite the family man which I hear you've become."

Campion laughed; but Giffard imagined that a slight restraint dimmed for a moment his happy manner.

They walked on together, talking of affairs in a desultory fashion until they reached the privacy of Campion's comfortable chambers. Then they looked at each other squarely and laughed with that half-conscious air characteristic of the average Briton when his emotions are called into play.

"Good old Giff—well, well! Now sit down and tell me every mortal thing that has happened to you since we parted."

"A large order!" smiled Giffard as he threw himself into the worn, comfortable easy-chair by the fireplace. "It's told in few enough words. I've been eleven years at Lotali, and my work there is done. At least it can be carried on by subordinates, and, after a bit, perhaps they'll find me another corner of the waste to till. I arrived only yesterday, but I'm not sure whether the chap who stops out of England hasn't a better time than the chap who stops in it."

Campion looked sympathetic, discerning some keenness of disappointment underlying the words. Both had arrived at the age when the vision is sharp and clear and when illusions do not appeal.

Of the two, Campion looked at least ten years the elder. He was three or four inches shorter than his friend, and his figure had acquired that set appearance which undeniably proclaims middle-age. He had a fine head, set thickly with fair hair, a ruddy complexion, and a pair of clear, beautiful blue eyes which had preserved an odd

boyishness of expression. Well-dressed and well-groomed, he had the appearance rather of a country squire than of a successful barrister. He was both.

"You came home only yesterday, you say. And where are you stopping?"

"What about your people?" had been the actual question trembling on Campion's lips But he had hesitated as he remembered that eleven years is a big slice out of a man's life, and that families have been wiped out in less time. Also, he imagined that he discerned a profound sadness in Giffard's looks; and he feared to speak any foolish word that might touch him on the raw.

"I'm stopping at 'Morley's.' I hadn't slept in it since my old dad brought me up to the Eton and Harrow match in the early nineties. God, what an eternity it seems since then!"

"He's gone, of course. I remember his death happened while we were at Jesus. Your mother?"

"Gone too—over three years ago. There's only my sister left. She's as good as dead."

"What's happened?" asked Campion, almost holding his breath.

"I thought you'd know. She's in the coils of the damnable business they call the Feminist Movement. But I forgot—you're in it too!"

Campion laughed a trifle ruefully, and, unlocking a cupboard in the wall, he took out a cigar-box, which he pushed towards Giffard, asking him at the same time whether he would have a drink.

"No, thank you. I'm t t.—obliged to be out there. Too many whisky pegs dig the white man's grave a lot deeper and wider and oftener than the climate."

"We're all in it now," said Campion, sitting down on the edge of the table and commencing to trim his cigar. "That Movement, is the only thing that counts here now except the Rights of Labour. Tell you what, Giffie—you and I were born fifty years too late. The day of our sort is over."

"No, by God, and it isn't!" said Giffard with a sort of quiet passion. "We're needed as we have never been yet. This poisonous growth has got to be stopped, and we have got to stop it."

"We can't, because, you see; the women have got justice on their side," observed Campion. "I don't like some of the fruits of the Movement; but it's only a fool and a coward who won't face the thing and admit that men have brought it on themselves."

"You've gone over to them clean, then, since your marriage," said Giffard with a faint curl of the lip.

"I don't think we'd better waste our time in discussing the Cause, need we, Giffie?" asked Campion with his sunny smile. "You must come down to Pennons and see my wife. She'll bring you over in half a dozen sentences."

"Will she? Then I'm not coming, Dick. I prefer my present state of heathen darkness."

"Oh, nonsense! You *are* coming down—this very afternoon too. We've a dinner party this evening, and I'm going down at six-ten. So is my wife, So you'll have lots of time to go to 'Morley's' and collect your traps for Liverpool Street at six-ten."

Giffard looked doubtful, but Campion refused to take any denial.

"I'm not going to talk about my wife, Giff, because you will have to see her before you can grasp the situation. She's a woman in a thousand, and, if she were not so desperate in this business, we should be the happiest couple in the world. It is in the last year that the struggle has become so acute. I sometimes wish that she had elected to remain with the law-abiding section of the suffragists; but, when you hear her, you will feel with her that force is the only argument which will make the smallest impression."

Giffard, lazily enjoying his cigar, surveyed Campion in astonishment. That a man of his training and his profession should give utterance to such a statement was far more baffling to his mind than all the antics of the militants. It simply indicated, to his mind, some strange mental perversion which went to prove that things were indeed topsy-turvy in England.

"I'm not competent to discuss the situation,

so let's drop it, Dick," he said quietly. "Do you go down to Pennons every night, then?"

"Most nights. It's only thirty-five minutes' run, and I can't sleep in London. Joan has a flat in Victoria Street, but there's no quiet there. I'm in hopes when the agitation is over that we shall get a chance to live in the good old way at Pennons and that Joan will get to know the county and the people. They haven't forgiven my marriage yet, simply because she hasn't given them the chance to know her."

Giffard was silent, drinking in all his friend said and growing momentarily more interested.

"Do you expect that this agitation will soon be over, then?" he asked.

"You mustn't call it an agitation in front of my wife, Giffie! It's the biggest thing of the century. Every politician quails before it, and it's going to be the death of this Administration. There can be nothing surer than that."

Giffard smoked hard for a moment or two in silence.

He was deadly sick of the Women's Movement, yet he was fascinated by its ramifications, which seemed to cover the whole area of English life.

"There's another reason why I'd like you to come down to Pennons to-night. My wife's son, Guy Delorme—G. D. for short—comes home to-day from Rugby for the Easter holidays. A fine chap. You'll like him. Joan's immensely

proud of him. I couldn't like him any better if he were my own son. Say you're coming, Giff, and I'll go and telephone to the Missus."

"I think I must see my sister first, though I don't exactly know where to find her. We used to be able to find our women at home in the place where we left them; but now they appear to spend their time between Holloway Gaol and what they call Headquarters. Good Lord!"

Campion laughed gaily.

"I suppose it must strike you as a bit queer, but it has come on the rest of us gradually, and we see nothing abnormal about it."

Again Giffard relapsed into silence. When a man's best friend has married a suffragist, the fact undoubtedly shuts a fellow's mouth! He has a certain delicacy about saying out loud what he thinks.

When the two friends parted about half-an-hour later, it was with the understanding that, if possible, they should meet again at Liverpool Street station in time for the six-ten train.

On Giffard's return to his hotel he found Elinor sitting in the drawing-room with John Howorth. To say that he was surprised would but feebly express his feelings.

From the doorway he watched them for a second or two, unobserved, and he wondered what topic of mutual interest they could possibly have found that had the effect of making them look so well

pleased with themselves and with each other. Knowing Howorth's opinion regarding the Suffrage Movement, he was quite astonished that he should think it worth while to talk to Elinor at all.

But she was looking charming. Perhaps it was to do honour to her brother that she had taken so much care over her toilet. She wore an afternoon gown of soft, dull satin with much lace about the bodice, a black fox fur which she wore regally, and a big black picture-hat which made a most becoming frame for her beautiful, thoughtful face.

"Ah, there you are, Ted!" she cried, jumping up at sight of him. "I've been waiting here quite an hour, hoping you would come. I've seen Louie. She told me of your visit to the flat. Mr. Howorth has been so kind to me, you can't think! The time has simply flown."

Giffard kissed his sister, nodded to Howorth, and suggested tea.

"I've been ferreting out an old friend—Dick Campion, Elinor. You remember him at Newark?"

"Why, of course. And we suffragists haven't forgiven him yet for annexing Mrs. Delorme. She is Mrs. Richard Campion now. It was only last year that she was married to him."

Her air was slightly triumphant, and Howorth was quick enough to read between the lines.

"I'll have an opportunity of meeting her this

evening," said Giffard. "Campion wants me to go down with him to his place."

"Mrs. Campion won't be going to-night, Ted," said Elinor quickly.

"I think so. He said that they had a dinner party on, and that his wife's son would be arriving from Rugby."

Elinor shook her head.

"Nevertheless, she has no intention of going. Urgent matters in connection with the Movement have arisen and will be dealt with at the meeting at Kingsway Hall, where she is to take the chair at eight."

"Campion didn't mention that, and most certainly he expects her to be there. I think you will find that I am right. If she has invited people to dinner, she has got to be there to receive them, hasn't she?"

"Not necessarily. There is somebody there—a sort of relation of hers who keeps house and sees to things generally."

"But she could hardly take her place as hostess. Campion would be entitled to kick at that, wouldn't he, Howorth?"

Howorth was not sure. He might have replied with perfect truth that the women engaged in the thick of the fight had no time for the small social amenities which are of supreme importance to those of lesser minds.

"I shall be much surprised if she doesn't turn

up at the station," said Giffard, pursuing the subject.

"And I, if she does," said Elinor significantly. "Sugar, Mr. Howorth?"

"Yes, please—two lumps. So you are deserting London after twenty-four hours, Mr. Giffard? I suppose I shan't see you again," added Howorth ruefully.

"Oh, yes. Why not? I'm only going down to dine and sleep at Pennons. You are engaged for to-night anyhow?"

"I was; but Miss Giffard has been trying to persuade me to break my engagement and to go instead to Kingsway Hall. I believe she has some idea of making a convert of me, though I've been trying to convince her that I am a hopeless case. She had hopes of us both, I rather think."

"I shouldn't have gone in any case," said Giffard shortly, and his voice distinctly hardened.

"I have to go home to-morrow," said Howorth presently; "and I want to fix up something with you, Giffard, before I go. You will give me a week-end at Crayham, won't you?—before your visiting-list gets uncomfortably crowded."

"That contingency is a long enough way off," said Giffard with a laugh. "At what time are you going to-morrow? I expect I shall come up to town with Campion in the morning. I could be here by ten or eleven."

"I'll wait till the one-forty-five, then," said

Howorth. "Now I must go, for you and your sister have a great deal to talk about. Good-bye, Miss Giffard. I wish it were something else than votes for women you are anxious to convert me to! In that case there might be a chance of your succeeding."

"And I am glad there isn't anything else, and I don't despair of you, Mr. Howorth," answered Elinor with her rare and beautiful smile. "You are one of the men we want to join our ranks—one of the right sort! The conversion of the other sort is a matter of no importance."

"Flattered, I'm sure," he said, and he went off with a laugh that had a slight shade of embarrassment in it.

"Elinor, 'pon my honour, I don't get the hang of this thing yet," said Giffard as he leaned back on the comfortable lounge seat and contemplated his sister with half-admiring, half-rueful eyes. "You saw Miss Desmond, you say. Did she tell you what a good half-hour we had?"

"She did; and she sang your praises no end. You've made an impression on Louie, but I warn you it won't last. Nothing does with Louie. She's the living embodiment of the whole problem of her 'disthressful counthry.' She can neither work nor concentrate for any length of time, but is always going off at some fresh tangent. Of course we have never at any time taken her seriously or considered her as a valuable asset to the Cause."

"She's very charming—and such a child! It's horrible to see so many of you out like this! I tell you it has given me a pretty stiff sickener of English life, Elinor. The sooner I get back to the outposts, the better I shall be pleased."

"Oh, nonsense, Ted. You'll soon get used to the new order of things, and will, I hope, become one of our sympathizers and supporters. Mr. Campion has, though he was quite lukewarm when he married Mrs. Delorme. Her earnestness and splendid devotion have convinced him of the justice of our Cause."

Giffard forbore to utter the suggestion which naturally rushed to his lips—that perhaps poor Campion had had no choice.

"I say, Elinor, can't we make arrangements to have a few days somewhere together out of this unholy commotion? What would you say to going to Paris? Let's go off on Monday."

"I'd love it, and perhaps we might go later on; but just now every moment is precious. This is positively the most crucial moment in the history of our Cause. Almost every day now, big things may happen. We are straining every nerve to force the hand of the Government and to force its downfall."

"And do you expect anything better from the next? From what I can gather from those in authority, they are harried and badgered, but, in spite of that, not a whit less bitter against the

demands of the women than they were at the outset."

"Wait and see," said Elinor enigmatically.

"Well, anyhow, I'm deadly sick of the whole business! And, if I can't find a corner in England free from this ghastly taint, why then, I'm off again as soon as they can find me a job."

"Have you heard anything?" asked his sister interestedly.

Giffard hesitated for a moment. As a matter of fact, that very day he had heard a good deal, which had been of immense moment and given great satisfaction to himself personally, and he had learned, among other things, that not one item of his self-denying and capable administration had been overlooked or minimized. A lesser man might indeed have been considerably raised in his own estimation by the kind, and even flattering, reception that he had received at the Colonial Office that very morning.

"I *can* get another job, and I've got considerable choice," he said guardedly. "But you're not interested, are you? There wouldn't be a chance of your going out with me, Elinor?"

His tone was eager, even a little wistful.

She shook her head.

"None. I could not leave England at this crisis."

"I wish to God I could lift you up and carry you off bodily! You're giving the best of yourself

—your service, your youth, your charm to this chimera. When I looked at you and Howorth together this afternoon and thought what a wife you might have made to him or to some other decent chap, and of what you have chosen in its place, I tell you I felt pretty sick!"

"Marriage as a career has fallen into disrepute among thinking women," she said flippantly, but her eyes did not meet his.

"Fudge! They're digging graves for themselves and for those who come after them as well. So you won't do anything for me, and I am to order my life as if you didn't exist? That's what it amounts to—eh?"

He rose as he spoke with the impatient air of a man who fears that he is engaged in a conversation which he cannot continue without losing his temper.

"Don't put it so crudely, Ted. Of course I shall give you all the time I can possibly spare. That is so like a man—to expect that every woman should just be at his beck when he is ready to call her! It isn't going to continue like that much longer, Ted, I can assure you. Men are already learning not to expect it."

"And what are they getting in its place—eh?"

"Comradeship, the respect and friendship of sensible, sentient beings instead of what they got before from women—the adulation of fools."

Giffard abruptly said that he would need to go

and pack his bag, and they parted coolly without making any arrangement to meet again.

He arrived in good time at Liverpool Street, and the train was almost on the point of starting when Campion came rushing on to the platform.

"So sorry, old chap, but I've been all this time trying to persuade my wife to come on with this train. She can't, however—she's detained in town for some beastly meeting. Well, we can't help it, and we must make the best of it. Never mind, old chap. We'll get over it. It's all in the day's work in these times. Get in. They're blowing the whistle. Ugh, what a near shave!"

CHAPTER V

THE ENGLISHMAN'S HOME

ESSEX, the county beloved of Constable, has many surprises for the traveller who visits it for the first time.

As one of the fastest trains of the day bore Campion and his friend swiftly beyond the wilderness of new streets into the wider air and the desolation of the marshes, Giffard was not favourably impressed with the scenery through which they passed.

But lo! and as if by magic they sped into an area which, for sylvan loveliness, could not be surpassed.

It had been a mild winter, and spring, coming early, surprised the earth into beauty at least a month sooner than usual. A faint greenness was already showing on the hedgerows, though it was only the last day of March, and in sheltered nooks the first frail harbingers of spring were rearing sturdy heads for the joy of all who knew and loved their haunts.

The train ran smoothly into Walden station,

which was the first stop, and outside the offices an open car, in charge of a smart chauffeur, was in waiting for the travellers.

Campion nodded carelessly to the man.

"Your mistress hasn't come, Baffin, so Mr. Giffard's bag can go in front. Get in, Giffie. Feel the difference in the air, don't you? Who says London after sampling this?"

Giffard sank into the luxurious seat and sniffed the air with due appreciation. He was interested in everything, and he gathered from the large number of smart equipages drawn up in the station enclosure that Walden must be a favourite residential place, and the train by which they had travelled one much patronized.

Their way took them through the town, which was a typically English one. Giffard was delighted with the extreme wideness of the main thoroughfare, which was marked off from the broad, grass-grown side-tracks by two long lines of plane trees, on which the buds were pink and bursting.

About half-way up the street the ancient Town-house, with a colonnade running all round it, indicated the centre and hub of things. Beautiful old flat-fronted Georgian houses stood in stately reticence on both sides of the street beyond the tree lines. Campion explained that these were all old family houses which never changed hands and which were tucked in delectable gardens hidden from view behind high walls.

"It's a fine old place, and it's only in England you can find towns like this," said Campion enthusiastically. "They never change, they are conservative to the last degree in every fibre of their being and manners, and it will be a bad day for England when that particular kind of conservatism goes. It represents all that is most worth retaining and worth cultivating in the national life."

These words filled Giffard with a surprise at once profound and unexpected.

"Hasn't the new order of things invaded Walden yet?—so near London, too! How many miles to Babylon, eh?"

"Just nineteen, and the trams come within seven of us. They're talking of extending the lines, and already we have an abominable motor-bus making Sunday trips to and fro. But we'll keep out the trams as long as we can. Their running would be the death of the half of us!"

Giffard glanced with some amusement at the rueful expression of his friend's face, finding it difficult to reconcile these utterances with certain others to which he had listened but a few hours before.

"When Walden becomes a suburb, linked up with Ilford and Seven Kings, I'll sell Pennons. No, I shouldn't like doing it. But it'll have to go even before the trams come, if Lloyd George mulcts us any more."

He set his jaw rather grimly, and Giffard, to

whom the somewhat peculiar character of the development of his friend in the last eleven years was immensely interesting, understood that they were on debatable ground and that the sooner the conversation was turned the better.

Cut off as he had been from home politics for so long, Giffard had not concerned himself very deeply with the internal policy of the Government, but he could imagine himself abandoning his attitude of aloofness and presently getting drawn into the vortex of party politics when a few more object-lessons should have been presented to him.

He had been reared in a good old Tory house, and his sympathies had not far to travel, therefore, to meet Campion when he spoke of his old home.

They came to its great gates presently. These were not far beyond the confines of the town, and Giffard's artistic eye kindled at sight of the hoary old stone pillars surmounted by griffins, the little lodge, creeper-clad, nestling at one side under shelter of one of the enormous spreading beech trees which lined the avenue and whose bare boughs interlaced overhead in such a way that glimpses of the low-hung, clear evening sky could be seen.

"It seems awful that you should never have been here before, Ted. How was it, I wonder? I suppose I had better tell you I had a step-mother who did not welcome my pals. But she made the old man happy, and I don't bear her any grudge for that. She lives in Italy now all the year round,

and she is very decent about her jointure. She has plenty of money of her own, and she has left it as a sort of sinking fund for the benefit of Pennons. But she never wants to see the place again. The County, you see, didn't receive her, and she never forgave them. It's an old story—peace to its ashes!—and it would probably bore you, though it might illustrate the indisputable fact that in social matters the laws of the Medes and the Persians prevail here as royally as they ever did. Here we are! Fine, isn't it? In its way I've never seen anything finer."

It was a very old house, built low, with a square front and two projecting wings. It seemed to stand rather high on a terrace, but presently, as they swept up the avenue, Giffard observed with a little thrill that it was surrounded by a moat and that entrance to the house could only be obtained by crossing the drawbridge. This they did in fine style, the wheels of the car giving forth a hollow sound as they struck the wooden floor, and so into a wide courtyard, where brief twilight shed a weird half-light.

"You'll have plenty of time to explore to-morrow," said Campion, pleased at sight of the evident admiration discernible in his friend's face. "Meantime we'll have to hustle. I should have explained—only I seem to have been talking nineteen to the dozen all the way—that there is a lady in the house, a friend of Mrs. Campion's,

Miss Jessy Devine. She keeps house and sees to us generally. It's an excellent arrangement. Why, here she is! Good evening, Jessy. I've brought a visitor to see you."

Giffard turned swiftly and saw, just within the low doorway, a slight figure in a blue serge skirt and a white blouse, with a pile of red-gold hair that seemed to weigh down her small head, a piquante face set in the most beautiful colouring, and a pair of big, glorious eyes of a curious hue, half-grey, half-green.

"Yes, but where's Joan?" she asked breathlessly. "Did she forget?—did you both forget that there are people dining here to-night?"

"No, we didn't forget, but Joan couldn't get away," said Campion. "I begged her to chuck the meeting at which she was to be in the chair and pointed out that it might be her duty for once, but she couldn't see it. You will just have to take her place, Jessy."

"I! Oh, I'm afraid they wouldn't like that! But won't you introduce me to your friend?"

"Sure thing. Mr. Edward Giffard, an old college chum just back from the East. When do they arrive?"

"Eight o'clock. It's twenty minutes past seven now. It is very awkward Mrs. Campion's not being here, isn't it, Dick?"

Campion shrugged his shoulders.

"It's deucedly awkward; but I look to you,

Jessy, to rise to the occasion. We must concoct some story to account for her absence. I think Joan had better be indisposed, don't you ? "

Giffard strolled back to the edge of the moat, looking, as he felt, desperately uncomfortable.

Campion and Miss Devine conversed rapidly together for a few moments, and when they had finished Campion called to Giffard to come into the house.

The interior of Pennons was even more arresting and beautiful than its outward setting. Everything was old, austere, dignified in line and treatment. It was the old English country home at its very best, without one jarring note. A wide hall with an enormous fireplace, the red glow of the logs in which seemed to take the edge off the cool, crisp spring air, the dark oak which age alone had polished, the subdued tones of the few rare rugs, the wealth and subtle odour of flowers and growing plants—all these combined in one harmonious whole which appealed to Giffard's innate sense of the beautiful and fit.

Yet the woman who was its mistress apparently prized it not at all, but found her chief interest and joy elsewhere.

As they turned towards the stairs, somebody suddenly slid down the banisters who presently revealed himself as a short, squat boy in an Eton suit, his broad, freckled, but very winning face shining cherubic above the spotless expanse of his collar.

" Hulloa, G. D.," said Campion cheerily, " how's the world using you ? "

" All right, sir. But where's the mater ? Oh, hang it, hasn't she come ? "

" No—detained in town, G. D., but only, we hope, until to-morrow."

" But Jessy says there are people comin' to grub," he said blankly. " Yes, sir," he added politely, as his stepfather introduced him to Giffard.

G. D. eyed the newcomer for a moment with the frank, critical look of a boy ; then he blinked his eyelids and wiped his hand before he offered it.

" Decent bloke," he mentally decided. " Wonder what he is good for ? "

Giffard's expression was friendly and inviting as it dwelt on G. D.'s plain but attractive face. He had the gift of winning young people, and he often wondered at it, being unaware that his interest in them and his love for them was the only outlet which he had at present for the greater gift for fatherhood with which nature had dowered him.

Giffard was shown to his room, where, in the midst of comfort, he made his hasty toilet. Before he had finished it, however, he heard through the half-open casement window the rumble of approaching wheels.

He put the final touches to his toilet with the speed of a man accustomed to act in emergencies, and made his way to the drawing-room, quite unconscious of the fact that he was a handsome,

distinguished figure, bound to create an interest in any drawing-room.

Campion was already there, and so was Miss Devine, who, in the interval, had managed to make a very effective toilet of some sort of green material which suited her rare colouring to perfection.

Campion looked red and uncomfortable as he welcomed his friend with delight.

"Somebody has just come. I haven't time to explain about the guests, Ted. They'll explain themselves. Ah, Mr. Thurston, how are you?"

He advanced a trifle nervously to greet an elderly gentleman of somewhat portly build with a pompous face and a rather bristly white moustache.

"I'm very well, thank you, Dick. I am sorry to have to bring my wife's apologies and regrets for not being with me. I've brought my mother-in-law instead. She hopes she'll do."

The most beautiful old lady Giffard had ever seen was on the Squire's arm. A small, fairy-like figure, so neat and dainty, so exquisitely gowned, a sweet, small-featured face of colouring so delicate as to put every other complexion in the room to shame, a pair of deep, flashing black eyes, and masses of white hair arranged under a mantilla of fine black lace—all combined to make a figure which, once seen, could not readily be forgotten.

"Mrs. Conrad!" exclaimed Campion, in a delighted voice. "This is indeed an honour. I

am so sorry my wife is not able to be here to-night to welcome you."

"Isn't she here, Richard? And pray, why isn't she?" asked the thin, high-bred voice a trifle imperiously. "And who is this you have in her place?"

"Her friend—Miss Devine, who lives here, and who is kindly receiving for me. You will permit me to introduce her to you."

"Surely. How do you do, Miss Devine?" she said, with a little, odd, old-world curtsy which Giffard hugely admired.

But, quick student of men and things as he was, the big, quiet Englishman discerned that for some curious reason—probably psychological—the old aristocrat did not approve of Miss Jessy Devine. He was not sorry for her, however. She was perfectly self-possessed and satisfied with herself. But he was genuinely sorry for Campion, placed in such predicament and compelled for expediency to lie regarding his wife's absence.

"May I present an old college friend?—Mr. Edward Giffard—Mrs. Conrad. Ah, here comes the Rector and Mrs. Benthall."

The Rector, a small, rotund person, whose happy face mirrored his genial soul, entered the room in the lee of his tall, acid-looking wife, whose tongue was feared in at least three counties, and whose parochial zeal was a fearsome quality, from the exercise of which the parishioners had no rest either night or day.

Immediately after them came Sir Winston and Lady Scoresby—Campion's nearest neighbours, with whose arrival the party was complete.

To his great delight, Giffard was told off to take in Mrs. Conrad.

"Now, where do you come from? I knew a Ted Giffard in the Engineers," she said as she laid her hand on his arm. "My husband was a soldier, and it was in India we knew Colonel Giffard."

"He was my uncle. My father was rector of Stoke Newark in Yorks."

"Ah, now we know where we are! And what, may I ask you, do you do for a living? You look as if you earned it, whatever it is," she said, smiling approval on the lean, brown, serious face bent deferentially towards her.

"I've been out in Uganda for eleven years—securing British territory, I suppose I may say. I don't know how else to describe my occupation."

"Eleven years!—that's a long time. On furlough now—eh?"

"Yes—for the first time since I went out. I have not been home long, but I find changes—lots of them."

"Ah, yes, of course. Changes everywhere—upheavals, deluges, cataclysms! That is a pretty table! Whoever decorated it deserves credit."

There was certainly nothing lacking in the table appointments to mark the absence of the mistress of the house. A particularly effective arrangement

of mauve and yellow crocuses—most difficult of all flowers to arrange effectively—struck a fresh and original note and was generally admired.

Miss Devine, at the head of the table, smiled deprecatingly and thanked the guests for their tribute, remarking on the scarcity of out-door flowers, which Mr. Campion always preferred to see on the table rather than hot-house ones.

"Our host is an old friend of yours, I believe," said Mrs. Conrad, in a low voice to her partner. "I suppose you have seen his wife? She's one of the new wild women. I don't mind confessing that I came here to-night for no other reason than to see her for myself. My daughter, Mrs. Thurston, could quite well have come, if she had chosen to make the necessary exertion."

"I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Campion," answered Giffard. "I have not been many hours in England, indeed, though so much seems to have happened that it looks as if I had been here for months!"

"Things are pretty rapid with us nowadays," said the old lady, with a somewhat regretful note in her clear, low voice. "And we old-fashioned women hardly know where we are! You must come and see me at my house at Chelsea. I receive on Saturdays. It would give me pleasure to see you. I am only down for a few days at my daughter's to recover from the shock of discovering that my parlourmaid—a good, old-fashfoned,

hatchet-faced woman of the old school—had become a militant suffragist and got locked up for hitting a policeman."

Giffard laughed rather hardly.

"It seems impossible to get away from this abomination."

She gave a little cackle of delight.

"Now you have named it! It *is* an abomination—an utter abomination—and no man can foresee the end! They'll get the vote—oh, nothing surer than that! But the mischief that has been done by all this agitation will never in this world be righted. The canker is in every household. It has undermined the womanhood of the nation, and heaven alone knows what the next generation will be like."

"They may settle down when they get the vote," said Giffard a trifle absently, for, in spite of himself, his eyes would keep wandering towards Jessy Devine, who apparently had managed to captivate Sir Winston Scoresby, who at the moment was laughing heartily at something she had said.

That his wife, bored apparently by her host, disapproved of the good understanding between the two was evident from the expression of her face.

"Most unfortunate that poor Mrs. Campion should be indisposed on the evening of her first dinner-party!" said that lady rather icily. "I suppose you have had Dr. Entwistle? Such a dear—isn't he?—but a trifle brusque in his manner."

"Oh no. You see, my wife's in London at her

flat," murmured Campion, reddening so furiously that Lady Scoresby's suspicions were aroused.

A little later in the drawing-room she seized upon the Rector's wife, who was likewise her bosom friend.

"My dear, what do you think of this? It's very strange altogether!—and most impertinent, I call it. Mrs. Campion ought to have put in an appearance to-night, even if she had hardly been able to crawl and could not have eaten a mouthful."

Jessy Devine, sitting on a distant sofa with Mrs. Conrad, would have given much to have been able to hear what the two arch-gossips were saying.

"And who, pray, is Miss Devine?" inquired Lady Scoresby, dropping her voice.

"Some sort of relation or dependant of Mrs. Campion's, we are told, and she has enough of assurance and to spare!" replied Mrs. Benthall. "Someone told me she had been a nurse. You know Mrs. Campion's former husband was a doctor. Most frightfully clever, it is said, but there was something—I don't exactly know what, but something—which prevented his climbing to the top of the tree, where his abilities entitled him to be. Quite true, I assure you. I had it from Sir Randal Roscoe, the heart specialist."

Lady Scoresby with incredible coolness put up her lorgnette and took a deliberate survey of Jessy Devine. "I've never seen the woman—Dick Campion's wife, I mean—but Suffragette or no Suffragette, she's a fool to leave her house and

her husband at the mercy of a hussy like that," said Lady Scoresby. "That sort of thing has but one *dénouement*, and a woman with eyes like that can have but one object in life."

"Oh, dear Lady Scoresby, let us hope for the sake of everyone concerned—but most of all for poor Mr. Campion's sake—that his wife will soon be cured of this folly."

"Cured? How is she to be cured? Dick Campion has himself to blame for what has occurred. He married her with his eyes open."

"And disappointed us all," murmured Mrs. Benthall, with a significant glance towards Mrs. Conrad, "for I'm sure that we all expected that dear Anna Thurston would have become mistress of Pennons."

Lady Scoresby sniffed.

"Men, my dear, in these days are as slippery as eels. They think nothing of dangling for years after a girl, appropriating the best years of her life, keeping other eligibles off, and then, in the end, going and marrying someone else! I'm thankful I've no daughters, though if I had had any, I hope I should have been able to look better after them than Emmy Thurston has looked after hers."

At the moment the gentlemen came in. Possibly Campion, uneasy at the idea of his guests being grouped about Jessy Devine, had cut short the sitting over the walnuts and the wine.

Somebody suggested bridge; and, after some

little fuss, one table was started. Giffard excused himself from taking part in the game, and accepted gladly Mrs. Conrad's invitation to her sofa, so that they might continue their talk.

"Play something, Jessy," suggested Campion, and presently they were all surprised by the quality of the music to which she treated them.

It raised her immediately in the estimation of the two music-lovers present.

It was a very typical after-dinner scene in an English country home—very peaceful, very home-like, and apparently without a jarring note.

Ten o'clock had just rung, and Mrs. Conrad had gently reminded her son-in-law that she was an old woman and would like to go home, when the door suddenly opened, and a woman's figure appeared. It was that of Joan Campion, with a long, enveloping cloak sweeping its fine lines, her beautiful face flushed, her eyes shining, her arms full of papers.

"I am so sorry!" she cried in her perfectly modulated voice. "But I am glad too that I got here in time to apologize and explain. There wasn't any meeting after all, Dick. In fact, to be perfectly honest about it, the police raided the hall and put out all the lights. And this is free and Christian England! I got away, went straight to the station, just caught the nine-ten, and here I am!"

CHAPTER VI

IN THE FACE OF THE COUNTY

IT was a very curious scene—a sort of study in expressions that would have filled with joy the soul of an artist.

Giffard half rose from his seat, his face reddening sensitively as he remembered the impression that Campion had deliberately tried to convey to the minds of his guests that his wife's absence was due to indisposition. Of course it had been a ghastly mistake to attempt to gloss it over, for even if she had not appeared, the falsehood would have been exposed in the notices of the meeting in Kingsway Hall given in the morning papers. But apart from that, one had only to look at the peerless creature standing in the middle of the room to grasp the fact that she was truth embodied and that she would thank no man or woman for lying on her account.

Everyone waited breathless to see how poor Campion would wriggle out of the difficult predicament in which he now found himself.

He laughed nervously.

"I told our guests you were not well enough to appear, Joan, so now you can take over the situation. I wash my hands of it."

It was in its way pitiable, and Giffard felt intensely for his friend. His own blood was hot in his veins, and he told himself that, had any woman by her vagaries put him in such a painful position, he would have repudiated her there and then.

Instantly the smile died out of Joan Campion's face, leaving it very grave but incomparably more beautiful.

"I am sorry," she said simply and quietly, speaking as a child might have spoken. "I see that I ought to have come to receive you all to-night. My absence was unpardonable, judged from your point of view and by your standards. I am sorry, Dick; and will you all, please, forgive me? A woman in my position has no right to plan dinner-parties. I am not free as the rest of you are, you see. I was pledged to stand by my comrades and friends to-night, and, if I had stood by them as I ought to have done, I should have been locked up with the others. So now you know."

She laid her papers down and dropped her cloak on the nearest chair with an air of weariness.

Giffard, with a curious sinking at his heart, thought of his sister, but forbore to ask the question on his lips, because he dreaded the answer that he might receive.

Mrs. Conrad, who, next to Giffard, had the finest

perception and certainly the most perfect courtesy among all in the room, was the first to make a move. She glided across the room and extended a kindly hand to Campion's wife.

"My dear, you look tired out, and you ought to go to bed. There is nothing to apologize for. We quite understand that you went where you imagined duty called you. Although we may happen to disagree as to the question of whether it was your duty, your motive for going appeals to us. And we have been very well entertained in your absence. Good-night."

Joan's lovely eyes softened, and the child-look was in them as she took the beautiful old hand in hers and stooped to kiss it.

Then the other guests dispersed one by one, the venomous tongues of the arch-gossips stilled for the moment—cowed, perhaps, by a sense of the presence of something deep and fine which they could not share, or even understand. For truth personified was with them in the room—truth and a fearless courage embodied in the whole bearing of that gallant creature, who certainly might be mistaken in her views, but who had all the courage of her convictions and feared their petty judgment not at all!

Campion went out to the hall to speed the parting guests, and Joan and Giffard were left alone in the room.

"You are Mr. Giffard. Perhaps you would

rather not shake hands with me. Your sister has told me about you and how you disapprove of us. I don't know what you will say when I tell you——"

"That she has gone back to Holloway," he said curtly, finishing the sentence for her.

Joan nodded.

"I don't know exactly what happened. The lights went out, you see, and a sort of *mêlée* ensued. There was a rowdy, hostile element present in the meeting from its very start. I am unable to tell you what occurred before Elinor's arrest. But that she *was* arrested is certain."

Giffard looked ineffably sick.

"Then, what happens to-morrow?" he asked, his manner abrupt to rudeness.

"The usual procedure," she answered, as if surprised that anybody should require to put a question, to her mind, so superfluous. "She'll be charged at the police court. You may bail her out, if you like."

"I shall certainly do nothing of the sort," he answered, with a tense, hard note in his voice.

"I dare say she would prefer that you should not interfere. You have returned to England just a few months too soon, Mr. Giffard. Had you timed your home-coming for a year hence, the struggle would have been over."

At the moment Campion, his face white and set, returned to the room. Joan smiled at him a little

wistfully, but there was no shrinking in her gallant bearing as she waited to hear what he had to say.

Giffard with a muttered excuse made haste to leave their presence, closing the door behind him with no uncertain hand.

He had forgotten Jessy Devine; and presently she joined him in the hall.

"Unfortunate fiasco, isn't it, Mr. Giffard?" she remarked, with her slight enigmatical smile. "What do you think of it all? It must strike you as very strange."

"I have not the right to comment, even if I were clear on the subject," he answered curtly, and with an air of constraint, "and, besides, I'm a guest in the house."

"Well, I'm not, and I am free to say what I think," she answered, as she poised the toe of her dainty satin slipper on the polished steel of the hall fender. "I've known Joan all my life. We are a sort of relations—cousins, in fact. Now, if she had done all this in Dr. Delorme's time, nobody would have been astonished or would have blamed her. He led her an awful life."

"Pardon me, Miss Devine. I have said already that I am a guest in this house, and I am certainly not going to discuss my hosts."

"Oh, why should you be so priggish? After all, we are man and woman of the world, and such things as these have got to be faced," she said, with an odd gleam from her dangerous eyes. "You of

course are all on Dick's side. But I must stand up for Joan, though I think she's making a mistake now—the biggest of all possible mistakes! When she told me more than a year ago that she was going to marry Mr. Campion, I begged her to cut herself off from the Women's Movement—at least from the militant party engaged in it; but she wouldn't. She was quite honest with Mr. Campion, however, and she didn't promise anything."

Giffard looked the distaste he felt for such revelations as she persisted in making, but Miss Devine went on, unabashed.

"He was simply crazy about her, and nothing would deter him from marrying her. I was living with her at her flat in London at the time he was visiting her, so I know. She begged him to wait till the securing of the vote was an accomplished fact; but he wouldn't listen to her. I am telling you this, because I saw how you looked at my cousin when she came into the room—how they all looked at her. She was a brave woman to face such a situation! I couldn't have done it any more than I could treat a man like Dick Campion as she does. But Joan is a law to herself and always has been. When she lived in Wimpole Street with Dr. Delorme she was like that too."

"I think, if you will excuse my going, Miss Devine, I'll say good-night," said Giffard stiffly, though he could not but admit that he was interested in what she was telling him.

"What! Going to bed already? Why, it's only twenty minutes to eleven! We are late sitters here, and Dick, I am sure, will wish you to smoke with him after a while."

"Doubtful if he will to-night, I should say. Please make my excuses to him and Mrs. Campion," said Giffard, and he escaped rather hastily, being in mortal terror lest the drawing-room door should open upon them and Campion should come out with his wife.

On the upper landing, however, he encountered a new menace in the shape of a short, squat boy in striped pyjamas hanging over the banisters.

"Awf'ly sorry," he muttered, looking into Giffard's face with his engaging smile. "But I was trying to make Jessy hear. Now she's scooted. Perhaps you can tell me whether my mater has come home. I left the bathroom door open, and I made sure I heard her voice."

"She has come home, my lad."

"Oh, good! Do you think I might go down? The mugs have all gone, haven't they?"

"The what?" asked Giffard, with an air of bewilderment.

"The grubbers."

"Ah, I see," he said, partially enlightened by the substituted word. "Oh, yes; they've gone. But I don't think you'd better go down," he said, recalling the look of strain he had seen on Campion's face in the drawing-room.

Seldom in his life had Giffard felt more thoroughly uncomfortable or had more earnestly wished himself elsewhere.

For a naturally reserved and eminently peace-loving man to be suddenly heaved into an atmosphere charged with the essence of family jars is a most unenviable experience. He longed for nothing more than to close and bolt the door of his bedroom and, figuratively speaking, to hug his solitude to his bosom.

But a round and very appealing boyish face kept him on edge.

"Supposing you come into my room for a bit," he suggested on the spur of the moment. "I hadn't time to unpack my things before dinner."

"Oh, rippin'! How awf'ly decent of you! I knew I would like you when we met downstairs. Where have they put you? Isn't this a rippin' old house? It's simply lovely for me to get home here for hols., and *he's* an awf'ly decent sort, don't you think?"

"Here—get upon the bed and let me cover you up," said Giffard rather peremptorily, wondering whether the dominant characteristic of this particular household was the continuous and open comment of its members on the characters and conduct of one another.

He tucked the squat figure well round with the soft folds of the silk eider-down, and G. D. sniffed

with delight. The square freckled face with the snub nose and rather wide mouth looked a little out of place against the soft pink folds.

As he stepped back from the bedside, Giffard casually wondered how Joan Campion had ever come to mother such a plain piece of humanity, and he asked himself whether in his looks he favoured the other parent, the ladies' doctor of Wimpole Street.

"Say, we haven't met before, have we?" inquired G. D. guilelessly. "What do you do for a living? You look like a soldier. Are you one?"

Giffard shook his head.

"I'm only a civil servant. I've been out in Uganda for eleven years."

"Oh, I say, how rippin'! And what yarns you could tell a chap, couldn't you? Do tell me some!"

"Not to-night, old chap. You stop there for only ten minutes to get warm; then off you go to your own bunk. Supposing you tell me a little about yourself? Somebody told me you are at Rugby."

"I am, thank goodness! *He* did that. Before we knew him it was rotten, Mr. Giffard, really. My mater had no money worth speakin' about. At least it wouldn't run to a public school, and I was just about being turned down to a beastly office, from which I should have done a bunk at the earliest opportunity. Then he came on the

scene—Mr. Campion, I mean—and now there's Rugby and all this! If only the mater——"

At this point, to Giffard's incredible dismay, G. D.'s gallant, chirpy voice suddenly broke, and a sob choked in his throat.

"Steady, old chap," said Giffard, sitting down on the front of the bed—"steady! Breaking down like that won't mend anything—never did yet. Did it now?" he added, appealing to what was most manly in the boy.

"I know I'm a rotter to blub, but I can't help it. It's all this bally stuff about Votes for Women! Oh, couldn't all that rot be stopped somehow, Mr. Giffard? It's doing such a lot of harm everywhere. Even at Rugger the chaps have got to know about my mater, and they rag me no end! If that was all, I shouldn't so much mind it. But *he* hates it too; and yet she won't stop! Can't anything be done to make her stop?"

"I don't think we'd better discuss it, my boy—do you?" observed Giffard as, with a good deal of unnecessary noise, he pulled out one of the drawers in the tallboys chest.

"But, hang it all, Mr. Giffard, my mater isn't that sort of woman, really! She's so awf'ly good-lookin' and rippin' in every way. You'd never think, lookin' at her, that she was a bloomin' Suffragette, would you now? Why don't they get hold of their own sort—the old maids and the

frumps—and keep to them and leave a chap's mater alone?"

Giffard could not forbear a smile, though his heart was sore for the lad's evident distress.

"Then he's such an awf'ly good sort, and it's hateful for him. It isn't fair, either. That's what I say, Mr. Giffard. To take as much from him as we've done and go on in that bally way! He's so good about everything too! He says I can have two chaps here for the 'long'—chaps whose father and mother are in South America and who'd have had to be boarded out at some beastly tutoring place and do holiday tasks, if *he* hadn't come to the rescue. But now they're comin' here instead. Then there's Jessy! She was awf'ly ill when she came to us. She had got used up—nursing, or something—and now see how well she is and what a fine time she has! And *he* pays for it all! It's hard lines on him. I say again it isn't fair——"

The boy was brought to a standstill by the sudden opening of the door and the appearance of Campion.

"What isn't fair, and what are you doing here at this time of night, you rascal?" he inquired, with an attempt at severity which didn't in the least deceive G. D.

"Oh, just something Mr. Giffard and I were jawin' about, and I'm goin' to bed, pater, really, I'm goin' now——"

He slipped from the bed and, as he passed Campion, he pushed a warm moist hand into his.

Campion stooped and kissed him.

"Good-night, my lad. Sleep sound. And don't let me catch you out of bed at eleven o'clock another night! Your mother has gone to bed. You will see her in the morning."

"Right-o," said the boy. "Good-night, Mr. Giffard, and thank you for the warm."

He closed the door and pattered away, while Campion laughed a trifle queerly.

"I dare say you'll think you have dropped into an odd kind of menagerie, Giffie," he said as soon as G. D. was gone. "Leave that stuff and come down and have a pipe and a drink. The night's young yet."

Giffard was not keen on going, for he guessed that the subject of which he was already mortally sick would in all likelihood prove the burden of their talk. But he had no valid reason for refusing, and, pushing his shirts into the open drawer, he signified his readiness to descend.

Campion took him to the most delightful of snuggeries—half-library, half-smoking-room—and thrust him into a comfortable chair. But, though they lit up without delay, conversation did not flourish—did not even start—for some time.

Campion was the first to break the silence.

"Giffie," he said at length, sitting forward

suddenly out of the curling smoke-rings, "this is a devil of a mess!"

Giffard only nodded. It was exactly his own opinion, and he had no comment to add.

"A devil of a mess!" repeated Campion; "and the worst of it is that Joan doesn't see it. Did you ever come across anything finer in its way than the figure she presented to-night in front of these old dowagers who help to lead the county—Lady Scoresby and the Rector's wife, I mean? Mrs. Conrad turned up trumps. But Joan doesn't care a fig for any one of them—eh, Giffie?"

"Of course I saw that," said Giffard a trifle heavily, realizing that something was expected of him.

"It was a pity that I tried to make any sort of explanation—and very foolish, besides. I ought to have known better, for Joan herself is as straight as a die and wouldn't lie to save her life. She's fine, Giffie—by God, she is! But, all the same, there's going to be the devil to pay."

"Didn't you put it to her to-night, then, Dick? What I mean is that you had a fine opening for speaking out your whole mind on the subject. If she's all you say, she ought to have been in sackcloth and ashes to-night for putting you in such a hole."

"You need to know her, Giff. I hope you'll stop long enough here to get to know her. Then you'll understand. She's out on this business as

a sort of holy crusade, don't you know. She's obsessed by it, clean carried away, and she has lost all her sense of proportion. There is no use of appealing to her reason just now. She thinks she and her followers have a mission to set the world right, beginning with us men, and Votes for Women is the medium by means of which this revolution is to be accomplished. She's willing to pay to the uttermost farthing for the leading part she takes in the movement; and I'm afraid she'll be arrested when she goes back to town."

"Has she been in gaol since your marriage?" asked Giffard. "By the by, how long have you been married?"

"Only seven months. And she promised to keep out of Holloway as long as she could."

"But why didn't you get her to promise more when she was in the yielding mood—to break with the whole thing, in fact? It seems to me you had your chance at that time, and that you missed taking it."

"You're wrong there, then, Giffie!"

"Then she can't have cared for you at any time," observed Giffard quite ruthlessly.

"Oh, yes, she did! I believe she cared and does care for me as much as she is capable of caring for any man. But the fact is, Giffie—and the sooner we realize and face it, the better—we men don't count as we used to in the lives of women. Their eyes have got horribly wide open

of late years. They say it is because they have begun to think for themselves and because they are no longer sex-blind. Whatever is the cause, there is no doubt that they've taken up a new attitude towards men."

"It's rather uncomfortable hearing for decent men," said Giffard slowly; "and, if what you say is true, isn't it going to work out something rather like race-suicide?"

"Certainly some new forces have come into being with the advent of this Movement, and with these men have got to reckon. And it will be after 'the fighting and the tumult dies' that the full reckoning will come," added Campion reflectively. "Things are going to be altered, Giffie—drastically altered—and we men shall have to come down from our pedestals and lick the dust."

"Oh, go along!" said Giffard, his gorge rising at the suggestion. "Do you mean to tell me that a handful of hysterical women are going to alter things that are in their very nature immutable? After all, we are the dominant sex, Dick. Take my work, for instance. Heaven knows I don't want to boast of it, but there never was a woman born—nor will there ever be one born—who could do it. Or take your work," he added, after a moment's reflection. "Do you know any woman who could carry a big law case through?"

"Oh, yes—heaps of 'em!" replied Campion with a kind of dogged cheerfulness. "But let's

come back to things here. I don't regret my marriage—not in the least. She's adorable as a mistress, a wife, a comrade. I tell you she has all the qualities that a man could possibly desire in his helpmate. And you've seen for yourself what she looks like."

"This unholy racket seems to rope in the best of our women," said Giffard musingly. "But isn't there another section, the law-abiding, constitutional suffragists? Why don't you get Mrs. Campion to content herself with joining their ranks and pursuing their methods?"

Campion shook his head.

"When the split came her sympathies were all with the other side. She thought that they had been badly treated, and that was enough to rouse all her fighting courage. Now she's simply infatuated."

A brief silence ensued, during which each was busy with his own thoughts.

"This is Friday night, Dick," observed Giffard presently. "You'll be stopping here over the week-end?"

"I needn't go up to-morrow," answered Campion, "and I hope my wife won't. You would have a chance to get to know her by Monday morning, if you stop till then too, and you would certainly get a little light on the Movement—first-hand information, if that is what you want."

"I don't know that it is," said Giffard grudgingly. "But I dare say I could stop. At least I

could come down again to-morrow night after I have gone back to town and seen a chap who is putting up at my hotel. I promised to see him early in the day."

"Right-o! Don't go up to bed yet. Why, I'm not nearly finished with you! I've had a good bit of success at the Bar, Giffie, especially in the last three or four years. It was the Moulton-Parr Succession case that set me on my legs. I've never lacked a brief since then. But a seat in Parliament is my ultimate goal. My ambition is to represent my own division of the county."

"And what are the chances of success?" asked Giffard interestedly as he resumed his seat.

"Ten to one, old Lord Francis Quenby will retire before the General Election, and I think I would stand a very good chance of getting his seat, if things are favourable."

"What about Mrs. Campion's attitude towards your candidature? I mean, how would the electors, as a whole, regard her?"

Campion's face distinctly hardened.

"It is my hope that she'll stand by me when the time comes and give up her own fight to help me. I'm very fond of her, Giffie, but, by Gad, if she should throw me over then!—and they might very easily give me a sort of ultimatum where she is concerned; in fact, there is nothing more sure than that they will—if Joan should throw me over—but I'm trusting to her."

Giffard rose again to his feet, rather heavily this time, as if he were depressed and were weary of the theme.

"I'll turn in, I think, old chap. In fact, I must. I'm deadly tired. I suppose all this hubbub is rather a strain on the elementary brain. And to think that I imagined I was coming home to rest!"

Campion patted his shoulder affectionately.

"Poor old Giffie! You'll get shaken down presently to the new order of things and take your place in them. Say, what did you think of Jessy Devine? Ripping little woman, isn't she? I don't know what we should do without her. She's one of the all-round sort, don't you know?—has a bit of everything at her finger-ends. Joan calls her the find of the century!"

"She's all right," answered Giffard, but his tone was distinctly lukewarm.

Long after he was in bed, tossing sleepless on his luxurious pillow, Giffard was haunted by the remembrance of an absurd sentence in his first school-book; a sentence which old Primmie, the nurse at Newark Rectory, had dinned into his ears:

"C-A-T spells Cat."

CHAPTER VII

UNQUENCHABLE FIRES

GIFFARD, usually a sound sleeper, had dreams all that night of fights with Amazons on the banks of some dividing river, and he awoke to wonder where he was!

He discovered that the housemaid's modest knock, announcing the bringing of his shaving-water, had really roused him from sleep, and a look at his watch showed him that it was half-past seven.

A neat, printed card, standing on the mantelpiece, informed him of the meal hours and the postal arrangements—a considerate act which rather struck him. Somehow, one would not have expected to find such orderly regulations in a house presided over by Joan Campion.

He thought a good deal about her as he made a leisurely toilet, and he decided that it might be worth his while to stop over the Sunday. The household was certainly interesting, even a little unusual, in its constituent parts. He rather

enjoyed, for instance, the prospect of further conference with G. D., whose remarks, couched in strange schoolboy slang to the meaning of which he had no key, touched a warm spot in Giffard's heart. Dick had hardly altered in any essential respect, but he was conscious of a strong desire to study him in his new rôle of husband to an advanced woman. Then there was the problem of Joan herself, to say nothing of Jessy Devine, who had so openly invited his confidence. But the latter he decided to keep at arm's length.

He purposely refrained from allowing his thoughts to dwell on Elinor, with whom he was now mortally offended. He felt that in her action since his return she had shown him the very scantiest consideration, and that, therefore, she deserved very little at his hands.

If she preferred Holloway to such a good time as he wished and had been prepared to give her—why then, she was at liberty to stop there. He resolved that he would not lift a little finger to help her again to her freedom. He forgot that the Militants had another weapon in their armoury, namely, that of the hunger-strike; and he was unaware that Elinor would commence to use that weapon that very day!

Completely dressed by a quarter past eight and lured by the soft April sunshine on the lawns, he ran lightly downstairs, and as he passed the open door of the dining-room, he could see beyond its

wide, low floor-space—where the beautifully appointed breakfast-table stood like a white and gleaming oasis—to a large conservatory, which was a blaze of colour. It was full of sound as well as of colour, he perceived, and, concluding that it was an aviary, he ventured to explore it at closer quarters.

And quite suddenly he came upon his hostess standing before the open door of a big cage in which there seemed to be a flock of canaries who were eagerly answering to her caresses and her call. She had one poised on her forefinger and was bending towards the others with a smile on her beautiful face, which Giffard remembered for a long time afterwards. No prettier, more home-like picture than that before him could any artist have imagined or any pen described.

Joan was dressed in a skirt of black-and-white check, beautifully cut, a white lingerie shirt and a black tie held down by a big safety-pin with a sapphire *cabochon* at the apex. Her beautiful hair, blue-black like a raven's wing, was carefully and becomingly dressed, and she looked to perfection the châtelaine of a great house.

"Oh, good-morning, Mr. Giffard," she said, made aware of his approach by the flutterings of the birds. "I must apologize for not seeing you again last night, but I am afraid that the awkward contretemps which occurred had put us all at sixes and sevens. I hope you've had a good night's

rest and that you were comfortable, wherever they put you."

She extended a white, well-kept hand, unadorned save by the rather broad circlet of her wedding-ring, and her friendly eyes smiled into his.

"Thank you very much. I was perfectly comfortable. I didn't awake until someone knocked at the door."

"Ah, that is good! Dick claims wonderful qualities for Walden air. I hope you are giving us the week-end?"

"Thank you. I think I shall have to go back to London this morning, if there is a train about ten o'clock, but I will come down again to Pennons in the afternoon or evening, if I may."

"There are heaps of trains. Walden is really well served in that respect. You are enjoying being back in England, of course? Dick has told me how long you've been away."

"I don't know that I'm enjoying it particularly," answered Giffard frankly. "As I said to Dick last night, I hardly get the hang of things yet."

"Ah, I dare say," she said a trifle musingly, but not at all with the air of one who is eager to plunge into the discussion of debatable subjects.

In fact, seeing her now—gracious, serene, and charming, in the dignified leisure of her home—Giffard found it difficult to recall vividly the events of the previous evening and his hostess as the principal figure in the scene then enacted.

"There is the gong, and here comes my son. Well, Guy?——"

Her wide, beautiful mouth quivered and Giffard was surprised to see the affectionate abandon of the meeting between G. D. and his mother.

The figure, attired in a flannel shirt and tweed jacket, simply flew to her arms and was clasped there with a joy there was no mistaking.

Giffard turned away with an odd tightening of his heartstrings, and he began to understand, partially at least, the infatuation of Dick Campion, which on the previous evening had been a complete enigma to him.

Magnificently dowered with gifts both of body and of mind this woman undoubtedly was. As woman, wife and mother she appeared to be without a flaw. How was it possible, then, to account for her strange secession from the normal grooves in which undoubtedly her spirit and her heart could be at home? In her was to be found every instinct of womanhood and gentlehood, yet she was avowedly a leader of the wild women, justifying to her own conscience and heart even "red ruin and the breaking-up of laws."

As a psychological study, she interested Giffard immensely. It was a far more subtle and alluring study than that presented by the same problem in his sister's life.

Had Giffard spoken out with brutal frankness his own secret conviction concerning Elinor, it

would not have been found to differ in essence from the coarse jibe of the man in the street who tells the advocate of Votes for Women to " go out and git a husbin' ! "

A few minutes later Miss Devine appeared, looking not quite so radiant in the morning as she had done last evening, and last of all came Campion.

It displeased Giffard profoundly that Mrs. Campion did not take the head of her own table, but relegated that position to Miss Devine, who occupied it as her right.

" What should we do without my cousin ? " asked Joan lightly. " Only she gets me into bad habits, Mr. Giffard. Jessy is the sort of person who never requires to ask a guest twice whether he takes sugar in his tea or whether he likes milk with his coffee."

" These are the details that find harbourage in a small mind, dear," said Miss Devine sweetly.

Somehow, the affected humility of the tone and the gleam from the greenish eyes filled the soul of Giffard with rage, and he wondered whether, after all, it would be possible for him to remain over the Sunday under the same roof with a woman he so thoroughly detested.

The question, however, was decided for him by Campion, who, contrary to his friend's expectation after what he had said last night, announced that he was going up by the nine-forty-eight.

Giffard imagined that he detected a slight appeal

in Mrs. Campion's eyes, but she did not say anything to make her husband change his mind, even when she came out to the step of the motor to see them off.

"I will be down at two-thirty, old girl," said Campion as he kissed her.

She put up her white fingers and patted his cheek much as she might have patted that of G. D., who was rapturously perched beside the chauffeur.

Giffard's keenly observant eyes in that simple act discerned much more than any of the others present imagined—Joan least of all—though the depth and the strength of Giffard's personality had already impressed her. He saw in it the whole attitude of the mother-woman towards the man who has not yet grown up, but is only a big child. It was a pregnant act, full of significance and pathos, and to Giffard it proclaimed the fact that the tragedy of the Campion marriage was yet to come.

For, while Joan had accurately enough read a certain side of Dick Campion's nature, she had altogether failed to gauge another and less likable one, which had not as yet revealed itself to her—namely, the great, dogged, invincible wall of British masculine pride and determination which, in the last resort, would prevent her husband's amiability and good-nature from degenerating into sheer weakness and being taken undue advantage of.

Giffard, who, as boy and man, had been beside Campion for seven long years, knew that side, and

he was sure that, just as soon as the vista of their life together had been cleared of the mirage of passionate love, that side would once more become and remain dominant.

Giffard's perception of the ineffable sadness, the sombre shadow of tragedy in the situation, seemed to seal his lips, and he marvelled at the sunshiny look in Campion's eyes as he turned in the car at the bend of the avenue to wave his hand to his wife.

"We've had it out, Giffie, and I think Joan sees that it isn't going to do. There never was a more reasonable woman in England, till these agitators got a hold of her!"

"Has she promised to break away from the whole thing?" asked Giffard with the deepest interest.

"Well, she has promised to keep out of the window-smashing and the bomb business. I think the attitude of the people we had at dinner last night opened her eyes a bit to the difficulty of the situation, and the tact and good-breeding of Mrs. Conrad, you know—perfect old queen that she is!—touched her beyond everything. I tell you, Giffie, that, if only Joan would chuck all this beastly business, there wouldn't be a happier couple than we two in the world!"

"Say, pater," called out G. D.'s chirpy voice from the front, "tell Baffin that I may try my hand on the steering-wheel on the way back, won't you? He says I jolly well can't."

"He's right too, my boy. He doesn't want to have his licence cancelled. And you're not of age to get one. If you behave yourself, I'll give you a motor-bike on your seventeenth birthday."

"Oh, gummy! What swank! Don't I wish it was here," quoth G. D., growing slightly purple in the face with the pleasing agony of anticipation. "Then, I'll get even with Baffin! Gee——!" he added, finishing his sentence by giving that highly-equipped youth a suggestive dig in the ribs, which Baffin, who cherished a secret admiration for the young master, in no wise resented, but, on the contrary, acknowledged with an understanding grin.

A crowded compartment prevented further talk of a private nature between Giffard and Campion in the train, and Giffard parted from his friend at Liverpool Street and made his way by motor-omnibus to Charing Cross, that he might get his letters and make inquiries regarding Howorth's movements.

He found several communications of immediate and pressing importance, the chief being a summons to attend at the Colonial Office at eleven o'clock that forenoon. He had just time to jump into a taxi in order to get there punctually.

Between twelve and one Campion was rung up at his chambers.

"That you, Dick?" said Giffard.

"Yes, old chap. What is it?"

"I wonder whether you'd mind if I don't come down this evening? I'm speaking from the

Colonial Office. Mortlake wants me to go down to his place in Surrey. The Chancellor and Lord Ruthin are to be there for the week-end, and Mortlake seems to think I had better go. They want to talk over affairs in Lotali."

"Good! You're getting on, Giffie—climbing fast to the top of the tree! But of course we must stand aside for such big bugs. And, anyway, you can come to us whenever you have an off-time. I'd like you to feel that Pennons was your head-quarters, and I know I can speak for Joan."

"Thanks, awfully," said Giffard. "Then, I'll accept Mortlake's invite."

"But what about your things?" asked Campion.

"Oh, I can manage. I've got what'll do."

"All right. Then you'll look me up at the beginning of the week and tell me all your news. Wish you the best of good luck, old chap. You deserve it all."

Among Giffard's letters was one from Howorth, expressing regret that he had had to leave town by the early train and reminding him of his promise to pay a visit to him at Crayham whenever he could spare a few days.

Giffard was rather surprised at Howorth's going off so suddenly, but concluded that he had some private reason for his change of plans.

He lunched at his hotel, looked over his things, so as to have what he required ready for his unexpected journey from Waterloo by the four-thirty.

And thereafter, having a couple of hours to spare, he took a taxi to Dorrington Mansions, compelled, though very much against the grain, to make some inquiries regarding his sister.

As he was being borne rapidly up Regent Street, his eye was arrested by the sight of some startling head-lines in the contents bill of the early editions of the evening papers.

"Riotous scene at Suffragette meeting at Kingsway Hall. Numerous arrests. Escape of Mrs. Pankhurst."

He tightened his lips and sat back in the far corner of the cab as if to hide his reddening cheek. He would—he must—refrain from purchasing an evening paper that day, for it would only exasperate him anew to read the public evidence of his sister's incredible madness.

He even hoped that he should not find Louie Desmond in the flat. But in this he was disappointed. The commissionaire informed him before he began the ascent of the stair that she was at home.

Her face was very grave as she bade him good-day at the door, and invited him to enter. She expressed no surprise at seeing him.

"I knew that you would come to-day," she said unexpectedly, "so I stopped in on purpose. I suppose you know that Elinor has been arrested again."

"I heard it last night from Mrs. Campion,"

he answered briefly, as he laid his hat down on the narrow slip of oak which did duty as a hall table and followed her into the pleasant sitting-room.

" From Mrs. Campion ! " she repeated, very much surprised. " Then you saw her ?—but you were not at the meeting. I made sure you weren't, for I looked for you everywhere."

" You are quite right. I wasn't. I went down with Campion by the six-ten train to his place at Walden. He expected his wife to go down with us. He had the right to expect her, too, for she had arranged a dinner-party for that evening, and she should have been there to receive her guests, but she wasn't."

" Oh, she wouldn't care about that," said Louie breathlessly. " The meeting last night was frightfully important, you see. Mrs. Pankhurst was expected to speak for the first time since she has begun to serve her sentence. She has been in a nursing-home and was nearly dead, really. They didn't re-arrest her last night, simply because she managed to get away. So did Mrs. Campion. But Elinor and seven others were caught and locked up."

Giffard sat down on the edge of the chair, and they looked at each other for a full minute in silence.

All the charm that Louie had found in his face yesterday had died out of it. It was set in the mould which irresponsible and wilfully defaulting subordinates in Uganda had learned to dread. Louie,

however, was not afraid of him, but was only sorry for him, and she thought he looked very old.

"Tell me all about it," he said curtly.

"Didn't you see the newspapers this morning?"

He shook his head.

"I hadn't the courage to look into them."

"I don't exactly know what happened," said Louie. "The meeting opened in the usual orthodox, stereotyped manner, Mrs. Campion making the dignified and capable chairwoman that she always does. Elinor was on the platform beside her, but I sat among the audience, partly because I wanted to get a detached view of the proceedings, and partly because, not being so keen as the others, I felt I had no right to make myself prominent. By the by, your nice Mr. Howorth was just in the seat behind."

"Oh!" said Giffard, wondering whether his hurried exit from London was to be accounted for by that fact.

"Mrs. Campion was speaking as usual of the futile tactics of the Government with special reference to the new Cat-and-Mouse Act, and when she had finished she called on Elinor to move a resolution regarding it. You haven't heard Elinor speak, I think?"

"No, and it's the last thing on earth I want to hear!" was his ruthless rejoinder.

"Oh, but apart from any consideration of the personal element in it, she's what audiences call

a treat. She has wit, Mr. Giffard, and has the gift of being always able to make her opponent look ridiculous. And, though she makes them all laugh, she herself never even smiles. She's more solemn than any Scotchman, though I don't know why I should say that, for we have often heard from Lady Frances that the Scots are the only humorous nation on the face of the earth!"

Giffard listened to all this inconsequent talk patiently, because he was in no particular hurry to hear the *dénouement* and also because he was once more fully conscious of the quaint charm of the narrator.

"No sooner had Elinor proposed a resolution"—Giffard was not sufficiently interested to inquire what was the substance of the resolution—"than the curtains were drawn aside at the back of the platform and Mrs. Pankhurst was pushed on in a wheel-chair. Of course she is desperately ill, and she had risen out of her bed to come, and her appearance was the signal for a most appalling din. The audience wouldn't let her open her mouth, which fact proved, of course, that there was a large hostile contingent present. In the midst of the *mêlée* that ensued, and while every kind of missile was being hurled at those on the platform, the lights suddenly went out."

"It was like pandemonium," went on Louie, with a little shiver, "and I was really frightened. But the darkness lasted for only a few minutes, and,

when the lights were turned on again, you never in your life saw such a scene! People were standing on the seats, yelling and shouting, and nobody knew friend from foe in the midst of it all. Mr. Howorth and I collided. He said the whole thing was damnable, and it was!"

"He left then, I suppose?"

"We both did. I rather think I was hysterical, and the only thing I wanted to make sure about was that no policeman should arrest me. So I kept hold of Mr. Howorth. He was awfully kind, really. He brought me home."

"And Elinor?"

"Oh, we saw her being taken away. She didn't want to go, and she had struggled a bit, and didn't look a bit like herself. Oh, Mr. Giffard," said Louie, with a little half-sob in her voice, "aren't you strong man enough to simply lift her up and take her out of England?"

Giffard rose and stalked across the floor.

"How can I? She is blind and deaf to every attempt at persuasion and argument," he said grimly.

"She has gone back to hunger-strike, of course. I believe Mrs. Campion promised her husband that she would do everything she could to keep out of Holloway, and last night she made the most moderate speech I've ever heard her give. But her moderation just means that the others will do and suffer all the more. I am certain that Elinor will."

"If she does, nobody is to blame but herself," said Giffard dismally. "But it was the right word that Howorth used!"

Louie Desmond sighed.

"I suppose I'm a poor, weak, vacillating kind of worm, but the fact is I can't stand much more of it. Perhaps my judgment has become warped. Indeed, Elinor's scorn of it is colossal! But I can't for the life of me understand why they can't grasp the main issue, and realize that, if we could all join hands with the constitutional suffragists again, victory would be certain. It's coming anyway in the near future, and what's the use, what's the use," she cried in a kind of wail, "of all this horrible martyrdom which the women are suffering and which is making the whole thing a byword and a reproach?"

Giffard made no reply.

"Tell me about the Campions. Didn't you like her? I've never met anybody yet who didn't. She has got even more personal charm than the Pankhursts."

"I liked her, of course. Apart from this hideous obsession, she's a perfectly charming woman. But she isn't playing the game down there at Pennons. Her own son said so to me last night—poor little chap—sitting on my bed at eleven o'clock at night. She'd better have a care, Miss Desmond. There are fires which, once lighted, are difficult, if not impossible, to put out."

CHAPTER VIII

ANOTHER VIEW

GIFFARD was surprised and, in a sense, chagrined to find that even the week-end quiet of a Cabinet Minister's house at Godalming was not immune from the menace of the Suffragettes. Not only did a plain-clothes detective patrol the park, but the subject of their strange and startling sayings and doings came up at every turn.

He had not been many hours there before he discovered that Votes for Women was the question of the day and of the hour, and that legislators regarded it at once as an intolerable nuisance and a grave peril.

But for that undoubted fly in the ointment, the visit was a complete success. For the first time for many years Giffard found himself in company with his intellectual compeers and living in an atmosphere of congenial and mutual respect.

His own affairs were discussed with great yet respectful freedom, and with a minute seriousness most flattering to his pride, and, when he was informed that the King wished to see him and to mark

publicly his recognition and appreciation of his services to the Empire, he felt slightly overwhelmed.

Through all, however, there ran the thread of profound sadness, because there was nobody intimately related to him to rejoice in his success and his prospects or to share them with him. There was not in the whole of England a soul more lonely and more utterly forlorn.

It was a men's party at Godalming, Mortlake being a bachelor, and the Women's Movement consequently was discussed with that frank openness of expression and comment which the presence of ladies might have modified.

Giffard obtained a lot of fresh light on the subject, heard the whole farce of the Conciliation Bill discussed and, incidentally, learned that in all probability the vote would become an accomplished fact, say, within a year. He also learned of the very large numbers comprised in the ranks of the constitutional suffrage party, by whom the victory, when it came, would certainly be claimed. But it was the militants who commanded supreme attention, and of whom the members of the Government lived in daily dread, fearing even bodily harm at their hands.

To Giffard the spectacle was at once astounding and humiliating. He remained forty-eight hours under Mortlake's roof, without once mentioning the fact of his sister's existence, simply because he was ashamed of her and all her works.

Arrived back in London on Monday forenoon, he made some study of his address-book, because he was by nature and habit both methodical and expeditious, and because it was his desire, so far as in him lay, to redeem all the promises which he had made in connection with the names that the little memoranda book contained.

Among the letters awaiting him was one which he was much pleased to receive. It was as follows :

"The Hollies, Clissold Park,
"London, N.
"April 3rd, ——.

"DEAR MR. GIFFARD,

"I was much pleased to receive your kind letter, and it makes me very happy to think that I shall soon have an opportunity of thanking you for your great kindness to my poor boy in Lotali. He spoke of you in every one of his home letters, but with special fondness and gratitude in his latest ones; and we know, although no one has told us, of your goodness to him in his last illness.

"We shall all be at home on Monday evening, and, if you will honour us by joining our family meal at eight o'clock, it will be a very special pleasure. I mention that late hour, because we are a very busy, working household, and it is the only hour of the day when we can be sure of all meeting together.

"Do not trouble to reply. We shall hope to see you on Monday evening.

"Yours sincerely,

"JANE MAITLAND."

He glanced at the envelope and observed that it bore Saturday's postmark and had evidently been delivered at the hotel late on the evening of that day. He decided that, as his evening was free, he would accept the invitation, and he at once sent a telegram to Clissold Park to that effect.

Inquiry informed him that the easiest and most rapid means of reaching the extreme north of London was by the Tube Railway, which would disgorge him at Finsbury Park station, from which he could reach his destination quickly.

About half-past seven he entered at Piccadilly Circus a very crowded train going north. There were a few strap-hangers near the door of his compartment, but just in front of him the narrow space was clear, and he could not help being interested in a young man and a young woman sitting opposite, who were carrying on a private conversation in very audible tones.

She was a red-haired girl, dressed in cheap finery—a coat and skirt of imitation tweed, a cheap blouse of Japanese silk with a very transparent lace yoke, and a large drooping hat loaded with tawdry feathers. High-heeled shoes and open-work stockings distinguished the feet, which, moreover,

were pushed well forward and her skirt was slightly raised to show the froth of her lace-trimmed petticoat.

She had a pert, though rather attractive face, and her eyes met those of her silk-hatted companion with an open and encouraging smile.

"Never seen me before! Oh, come! I like that!" said the latter with mock chagrin. "We've met at Gillespie Road station scores of times. Haven't I seen these peepers of yours light up the whole station?"

"Oh, git along!" she giggled delightedly. "I'm dead cert. I never saw you between the eyes before. Do you live at Gillespie Road?"

"No. I dig with a pal in Corunna Square. Know it—eh?"

"Oh, yes. I live in Paragon Terrace."

"On your own or with a pal?"

"With my people—for my sins."

"Why do you say for your sins? They can't be very many or very bad, I bet."

"I say it, because there's such a lot of us living there. A regler rabbit-hutch our house is! My mother is at home Saturday nights. Music—don't you know?—and a rubber for them that don't care for the banjo. Perhaps you know my brother?" she added, with an air of conscious pride—"Ernie Pratt, you know. He plays for the Tottenham Rovers."

"My! Are you Ernie Pratt's sister? I'm in

luck. Great old player is Ernie. He'll be in the International yet ! "

" It's what he's after, you bet," she answered, highly delighted. " Well, perhaps you'll drop in on us one Saturday night. You'll see Ernie then. Are you a sportsman ? "

" Not much. I'm on the road, travelling in leather for Messrs. Lazenby, of Leicester. You really mean that I may drop in on you in a friendly way one Saturday night ? "

" Of course I do. But who shall I say is calling ? Mother's very partic——"

" Has to be, of course, with such goods in the front window," he broke in impressively. " If you're a fair sample——"

" Oh," said she, interrupting him in her turn, " I'm the Cinderella of the show. You should see Daisy—she's a perfect peach ! But it's ' Keep off the grass in the garden ' when she's around. She's all but engaged already."

" Oh, who's the happy man ? "

" Wilfred Stubbs. He's in Lipton's—will be made a partner soon, if you're to believe what he tells you. But he wouldn't suit my book. He's too much of a Bluebeard for my taste. You should 'ave 'eard 'im 'old forth 'cos Daisy went to a Suffragit meetin' one night ! "

" Say, you aren't a Suffragit, are you ? " he asked.

" No, but I'm thinkin' of joinin' 'em."

"It wouldn't be in your line. It's the other sort —those without form and void—that go in for that mugs' game—the sort that no chap would look at."

"Oh, but you're wrong! Some of them are quite decent-looking girls. I hear they can afford to do themselves rather well, the pay's so good. There's a livin' in the Suffragit business for an open-eyed girl, Mr.—Mr. ——"

"Collins," he answered laconically, when she made a pause to allow him to supply the name, which, in his eagerness to compliment her, he had omitted to give when she had asked him.

"Say, you wouldn't think I'm down on my luck to-day, would you?" asked the girl.

"Well, you don't quite look it," he answered. "I hope it isn't true," he murmured sympathetically.

"Yes. I got the push to-day from my billet—Jones and Mullinses. In the fancy, I was, and the shopwalker—a beastly, sandy-haired chap—took a spite at me. I can't very well explain why; but —well, perhaps you can guess."

"Course I can. I know the ways of counter-jumpers. They are the limit, they are! He presumed on his position, I suppose?"

"You're wonderful!" said the red-haired damsel, dropping her voice to an admiring whisper which, however, was quite audible to Giffard. "I never did see anybody quite like you. And when I—when I——"

"Answered him as a lady should," murmured the gentleman of the road.

"Yes, of course. He got me fired. Beastly hard lines, wasn't it? But there! Things are hard for us sales-ladies. That's why I'm thinkin' seriously of joinin' the Suffragits. I know a gel who gets three quid a week at the job. Miss Francis, the head of our outfittin', told me; she's one of them, and she knows."

"Do you mean that the window-smashers and bobby-bashers get three quid a week?" inquired Mr. Collins incredulously.

She laughed hysterically.

"Oh, I never did see anybody half so funny as you! I'm sure you'd make a fortune on the stage. Harry Lauder isn't in it with you!"

"Well, but really, where does the oof come from, if they pay like that?"

"They've got what they call a War Chest, and the money comes rolling in, and it's never empty. They say Christabel gets five quid a week for doin' nothin' in gay Paree. Don't I wish I was her! Oh, my l, Gillespie Road already! Mine's the next this evenin'—worse luck. Don't forget eleven, Paragon Terrace—Saturday night—seven to fen!"

"Good-night, Miss Pratt. Charmed to have met you. I shan't forget Saturday night, you bet! Love to Ernie."

Mr. Collins walked off smiling, and, preening herself over what was undoubtedly a new conquest,

Miss Julia Pratt glanced boldly across at the immovable, sphinx-like face of Giffard, who had been hugely amused by the whole episode.

Once free of the surging crowd of home-coming workers who got out at Finsbury Park, Giffard secured a hansom—a species of vehicle which appeared to hold its own as a means of conveyance in these remoter suburbs, and was quickly borne to his destination.

The hansom drew up in front of a small, neat, double-fronted villa with two scraggy holly-bushes in the front garden, which presumably were responsible for the name of the house.

The door was opened to him by a middle-aged, comfortable-looking woman wearing a black frock, the fine masses of her hair, still quite free from any tinge of grey, coiled round her head, her whole appearance alert, rather attractive, and suggestive of great capability.

"How do you do, Mr. Giffard? I can't tell you how pleased I am to see you and how kindly I take this visit," she said, and, as her warm 'kind hand clasped his, her pleasant voice broke a little.

"I am pleased to come, Mrs. Maitland, for I liked your boy, and I have brought home all the things of his that I thought you would like to have. They are here."

He set the small dispatch-case on the hall table, and she immediately laid her hand on it with a quick proprietary air, which spoke volumes.

"I hope we shall have a little quiet talk later, Mr. Giffard, and I must not indulge myself in any now, for they are all waiting for their dinner, and we don't want to have a sad meal. There is so little time in the world now for grief. It is one of the luxuries few of us can afford to indulge in."

Giffard was struck by the words and by the combination of deep feeling and absolute self-control which she showed and which is, perhaps, more characteristic of the Scots than of the people of any other nation.

"Come into the drawing-room. They are all waiting," she said. "I have five at home with me here, and we are all as busy as bees. I dare say Colin would tell you that I am in business. I don't usually get home so early as this; but they sent on your telegram, and I hurried away."

She held open the door of what seemed to Giffard, as contrasted with the spacious country house from which he had so lately come, a very small, confined place, too full of furniture and swarming with people.

Three young women in pretty frocks with high neck-bands and two young men stood round in an odd kind of semicircle, and he was introduced to each of them by name. He could not afterwards have sorted them out, but even his first impression was that of the capability and charm of the women and the dullness and insignificance of the men of the house.

One of the latter was tall and lanky and feeble-looking, the other was undersized and plain, and neither of them in the slightest degree resembled the sturdy, open-faced lad who had been with him at Lotali and who, to Giffard's great regret, had succumbed just eleven months ago to his fifth attack of jungle fever.

Before he had been seated half an hour at the table he grasped the fact that the feminine was the dominant element in that household and that most of the brains were concentrated—or, at least, had been most cultivated—in that capable mother and her three equally capable daughters, two of whom, he learned, were teachers, while the third was engaged in secretarial work for a large syndicate in the City.

The boys, Gavin and James, appeared to be clerks—the one in a bank and the other in a commercial house. They had very little to say for themselves, however, and they seemed to occupy a very subordinate position in the house.

All the inquiries regarding his life in the East came from the ladies, and, while the boys listened with a detached interest, they, as the meal progressed, cast frequent glances at the clock—a circumstance which seemed to indicate a certain uneasiness in his company and a desire to be gone.

"All right, boys—you want to be off," their mother said at last. "Mr. Giffard will excuse you. They're training at the Polytechnic," she added,

as they moved off, "and must get there not later than nine."

"What are they training for?" asked Giffard, but, somehow, nobody answered him.

It struck him afterwards that perhaps they did not know. Their recreations and pursuits were probably as vague as they themselves were.

The three daughters interested Giffard as being of a type which he did not remember to have observed when he had lived in England, and he took it for granted that they were products of the new cult of Feminism, forgetting that his old-time knowledge of women had been confined chiefly to those of the leisured and sheltered classes.

He did not admire these young women, but they compelled his respect. They never made a foolish or unnecessary remark, but seemed to have a reasoned acquaintance with every subject which came under discussion.

He longed to ask whether they were Suffragettes, and he came to the conclusion that probably they were. Without asking a direct question, however, he managed to get corroboration of this inference and to obtain the information he desired. It came in the ordinary course of conversation through a remark that Mrs. Maitland made regarding the inevitable changes which he must have found in England on his return after such a long absence.

"I suppose the biggest change you will have

found is among the women," she said, in her clear, pleasant voice. "The new age is to be the Women's Age, Mr. Giffard."

Giffard did not know what to say in reply, so he occupied himself with the paring of the apple on his plate.

"I am sure Mr. Giffard disapproves of that remark, mother," said Janet, the eldest of the three, noting their guest's silence and smiling at him through her quite becoming pincé-nez.

"As a matter of fact, Miss Maitland, I am prejudiced. I arrived in London to find my only kith and kin doing time in Holloway, and that naturally has made the whole question anathema to me."

"Indeed!"—they all looked deeply interested—"but we belong to the law-abiding section of the Movement, Mr. Giffard, and we don't go to Holloway," said Janet, speaking for the rest. "Apart from the personal indignity and discomfort involved in being committed to prison, we should regard it as a hideous waste of valuable time and energy to be detached from work for the Cause in that fashion."

"Those who do go appear to think that it serves some useful purpose, that it is, in fact, the 'only way,'" quoth Giffard rather ruefully. "May I inquire whether you are all suffragists?"

"Every one of us. Mother is the organizing secretary of our branch, and we all do as much as ever we can for it."

"And is there not a house in all England where the women are——"

"Untainted?" put in Mrs. Maitland, with her good-natured, motherly smile.

Giffard nodded.

"There are a few, but they are chiefly those in which the women have not yet awakened to independent thought or which are under masculine domination," continued Mrs. Maitland. "But, if we start this theme, we shall have time for no other, Mr. Giffard. Will you come to my sitting-room, where we can be alone and where I can hear what you have to tell me about my boy?"

Giffard rose with a feeling of relief and followed his hostess up the narrow stair to a small room opening off a half-landing, which appeared to be used as a kind of office. It did not look in the least like a woman's room, but it held two comfortable chairs, one of which she drew forward for him, and then she asked him whether he cared to smoke.

"Presently, Mrs. Maitland; but I should like to tell you a little about the boy first."

She nodded, seated herself in the arm-chair beside the desk, and waited for him to speak.

It will not forward the progress of this little drama to narrate the brief story of Colin Maitland's brave fight with climatic conditions and of his ultimate vanquishment thereby. Giffard told the story with a tenderness and a reserve which did him

infinite credit, and not a particle of which was lost on the listening mother.

She wiped her eyes from time to time as he proceeded, and when he had concluded, she did not speak for several moments.

"I don't know how to thank you, Mr. Giffard," she said at the end of these. "To have you come and sit here with me and tell me the whole story makes it easier to bear. I was very rebellious when Colin was taken away from me. He was the best of my boys. He had most of the brains and of the capacity for work. I can't say very much in that way for the other two."

Her tone took on a slight bitterness with the last words; and quite suddenly she sat forward with her elbows resting on her knees and her deep, work-worn eyes looking into his face with a strange intentness.

"It may seem strange and perhaps even heartless to you, Mr. Giffard, that I should speak thus, but I am prouder of my dead boy and his record than of my two living ones with their lives and chances all before them."

Giffard felt at a loss. He was far too candid and honest a man to utter vague, well-meaning words of praise of young men of whom he had almost no knowledge—words, moreover, which he knew would not in the least deceive or comfort the clear-eyed woman before him.

"They are young," was all he said. "Possibly they may wake up a little later on."

She shook her head with a slightly melancholy air.

" They lack what their father before them lacked and what I have not been able to put into them, either by example or by precept—a sense of responsibility, I mean. You have seen all my family to-night, Mr. Giffard, and I assure you they are typical of the altered conditions of home-life in England to-day. Tell me what is the impression left on your mind ? "

Giffard looked the discomfort he felt. It was an extraordinary position that her question placed him in, but she apparently saw nothing incongruous about it.

She spoke to him much as she might have done had she been a man, and there was no hint of deference in her bearing or manner, even though he had been her son's official and social superior in the East, and though there was not the least doubt of her genuine gratitude to him for all he had done for her boy.

" I think that I have had the good fortune to be introduced to a remarkable quartette of ladies," he answered truthfully enough.

Mrs. Maitland sat back, nodding with a smile.

" Then let me assure you that you are mistaken, that we are not at all remarkable, that there are thousands like us in London, in the provinces, and in Scotland. We are the advance guard of the Women's Age which is going to be inaugurated

and carried on—not by a handful of hysterical law-breakers, but by a great army of educated, intellectual women with heads and hearts sanely balanced. And your sex will have to look out," she added—"that's all! You look incredulous and far from well pleased, but it is the truth I am telling you," she said, with an odd lapse into Scottish idiom, which showed how deeply she was moved. "I have arrived where I stand to-day only after travelling a long, hard road, the stones of which were strewn by masculine incompetence and folly. I am not a widow, Mr. Giffard, and in that fact you have the whole tragedy of my life."

Giffard drew out his cigarette-case and asked whether he might light up. He asked himself at the same moment how soon he might decently leave the house, for here was the Feminine Movement in a new guise, and it looked as if there was some wholesale conspiracy to prevent his escape from it even for a moment!

This Spartan mother, not destitute of natural affection—for he had marked it soften her face into indescribable tenderness while he spoke of her brave, dead boy—and her three cool, clever, capable daughters, equipped with every quality which makes for success in life, seemed to him nothing but a menace to the peace and stability of the State and to the unity and comfort of home-life, which was absolutely repellant to him.

His vision was distorted—he could not see straight.

When he bade good-bye to them individually and collectively, about half an hour later, he carried away with him an uncomfortable and haunting memory of the uprise of a new and terrible womanhood, alert, capable, wide-eyed, and absolutely fearless, which would weigh him and others like him in the balance and find them wanting.

CHAPTER IX

PAYING THE PRICE

"ANOTHER attempt must be made to rush the House—that's all—or to get into Downing Street," said the leader of the Militant Suffragist Party calmly. "We must do something before the members all clear out for Easter."

The little group of women, gathered round the table, nodded in full acquiescence—all but one.

Mrs. Campion, once the boldest and most fearless of them all, shaded her brow with her hand and looked down at her writing-pad, on which she was making meaningless hieroglyphics with her pen.

"The question is how we are to divide and arrange," went on the leader, fixing her hollow but quite merciless eyes on Joan Campion's downcast face. "What do you suggest, Mrs. Campion?"

"I may suggest—and you all know it—that I am in sympathy, but that I can't take part in any such expedition. I have explained my position

to you more than once before. I have promised my husband that I will keep clear of Holloway and of any action that might land me there, and I must keep my word to him. You agreed to accept that limitation of my service when I told you about my intended marriage and offered to withdraw from the party."

"The private claim must be waived for the greater and more sacred one," said the leader calmly as before. "What do you all think?"

It was a striking little scene in its way, and a keen student of human nature would have been fascinated by the sight of the varying expressions on these worn, sad, eager faces, every one of which save Joan Campion's bore the trace of suffering, privation, and strain. At least two of them looked as if Nature, tried to her utmost, had given her ultimatum and set a limit to life itself.

Joan Campion's beautiful, clear-complexioned, rounded face, the picture of health and freedom from care, was in its way a striking physical comment on the folly of those who had sacrificed all, while at the same time the fact that it implied an easier lot than many of them had willingly given up in the interests of the Cause was a reason of grudge and reproach against their leader.

In spite of the hold she had had on the affection of her colleagues, she was perfectly aware that her influence had been weakened by her marriage and that by the more fervent devotees of the Cause

she was now regarded, if not as a blackleg, as, at least, three parts renegade.

Her quick, sensitive spirit, responsive to the slightest breath of coldness or shadow of mistrust, was never more conscious of hostility than at that moment. It is not to be expected that even the claims of a great Cause can altogether eradicate human passions from the minds and hearts of the women who engage in it; and envy, jealousy, grudging dislike of that brilliant creature whom Nature had so richly endowed and who, previous to her marriage, had been one of their most beloved leaders, all these were present and in active operation in that narrow, but now almost historic, room known as "Headquarters," and the object against whom they were directed was thoroughly aware of it.

All eyes were fixed upon her, and, though not another word was then spoken, their very silence proclaimed that they thought her reply inadequate.

"Your husband is not a Member of Parliament *yet*," observed the leader quietly, after a pause of considerable length, "and arrest need not necessarily follow this time. There are ways of avoiding it, as we all know," she added, with a slight emphasis and with a faint inflection of scorn in her low, but startlingly clear voice. "I think we must insist, Mrs. Campion, on your being one of the raiding party, especially as Miss Giffard's absence makes us regrettably one short."

Joan did not speak for a moment, for the name

suddenly recalled to her memory a rather poignant half-hour which she had had at Pennons, when Dick had appeared more angry and determined than she had imagined him capable of being.

Just for the fraction of a second, feeling these cold, hostile, accusing eyes fixed upon her, she regretted that she had listened to the pleading of her woman's heart and allowed her longing for a little bit of personal happiness to assert itself at the expense of that whole-hearted and exclusive devotion to the Cause which she had previously displayed.

Married at seventeen to a bad man by parents who ought to have known better than thus to doom her to a life of wretchedness, but who merely used their beautiful daughter as a lever to elevate their own doubtful social position, Mrs. Campion had found the iron enter early into her soul, and she had been both ripe and ready to throw herself heart and soul into the most revolutionary wing of the Women's Army, when the question of the adoption of more aggressive and drastic methods and action arose.

Then quite suddenly Dick Campion had come into her life, and it had been a case of mutual love at first sight. Joan, still young in heart at thirty-four, had been amazed at two things—at the depth and the strength and the resistless tide of her own awakened passion, and at the power and sweetness of a good man's love. Dick Campion's

unselfish devotion and protecting tenderness had appealed to a side of her woman's nature that hitherto had been starved. Small wonder that her heart had leaped to meet his and that for a brief spell her happiness had been divine!

On his asking her to become his wife, when she had tried to explain how she was pledged to the Cause, he had just laughed his big, genial laugh, and, gathering her in his arms, sworn that nothing —no, not twenty Causes, each spelt with a bigger C than all the others, should part them.

And he had persuaded her to run away with him, and that clandestine marriage had scandalized his county and endangered his own popularity at Walden, besides creating a prejudice against herself, which, so far, she had done very little to disarm or remove.

Dick had said joyously that she was welcome to adhere to the Cause, provided she did not do anything desperate or atrocious or drag his name through the mud; and Joan, after frank consultation with her colleagues and after their sanction, rather grudgingly accorded, had given the promise which he had asked from her and which she still intended to keep.

Man-like, Campion believed wholly in his own power to keep the woman he had won and even to guide her, by gentlest methods, into his own way of thinking. He had no idea of the power and tenacity of the new forces that had come into being—

certainly none regarding the strange new code of personal and private honour which fanaticism had adopted as its own.

In common with thousands of other reasonable men, Campion was of opinion that women ratepayers had certain grievances which a modified and restricted extension to them of the Parliamentary franchise would remove. But training and tradition made him hate with a mortal hatred everything that savoured of opposition to constitutional procedure, and, moreover, he expected, as of course he was justified in doing, that his wife would respect the promise she had given not to make his name a byword among his compeers.

He was, however, frankly disappointed at the manifestation of the difference between his own and Joan's reading of certain words before they had been long married, and he had been specially embittered by the fiasco of the first dinner-party at Pennons, on the success of which he had built such hopes. That Joan should have thrown him over at the last moment and—to make bad worse—that she should have thought so little of her offence against the social laws which governed Walden society, had been at once a revelation and a shock to him.

He had spoken with no uncertain voice in the drawing-room on the night of the party at Pennons, and Joan was thinking of that now, as she wavered with slightly downcast eyes in front of her comrades

who, for the moment, were also censors of her attitude and conduct.

"It will be difficult, if not impossible, to effect an entrance into the House now," she said at length. "All sorts of fresh precautions have been devised and will be in operation. Besides, what is the good? We have proved the futility of all such raids on the House. So far as getting into touch with Ministers, or even with members, is concerned, they are a complete failure."

"Perhaps you have something else to suggest," observed the leader coldly. "We shall welcome suggestions, provided they are worthy of our consideration."

"I have none to make," answered Mrs. Campion, nettled by the tone rather than by the words. "I am only voicing a conviction which is shared by others—by Miss Giffard, for instance."

At the moment there was a low knock at the locked door, and, when the key was gently turned by the one sitting nearest it, a little thrill ran through their whole number.

A hollow-eyed, pallid ghost of a woman stood on the threshold, whence she was immediately helped to a chair, where they hung over her with every expression of sympathetic but indignant welcome.

It was Elinor Giffard, who had just arrived from her third hunger-strike, who had tasted neither food nor drink for the six days she had passed in Holloway since her last arrest, and who now

most certainly looked as if she was on the verge of collapse, if not of dissolution itself!

But she smiled bravely into the faces of the company assembled, and the leader flashed a glance of triumph and significance at Joan Campion, as if she would point the moral of this opportune appearance.

"Has the fine been paid again, my dear?" she asked, putting her arm about Elinor's thin shoulders.

Elinor shook her head.

"Oh, no—at least, not that I am aware of. I was released, as is their way, because they were afraid of fatal consequences. They told me only at ten o'clock this morning that I was free to go, and they made no inquiry regarding my destination and no conditions as to my future movements. When I got out I simply hailed a taxi and drove here, hoping that some of you would be about."

"Yes, yes, my poor child, but you look desperately ill! Hadn't you better go at once to the Nursing Home where the others are?"

But Elinor seemed to shrink.

"I think I shall go to my own flat. Has anyone seen Louie? I had hoped she might be here."

She glanced round with an air of disappointment, and her eyes fell on Joan's face. Something in its expression struck her, and she repeated the question, this time directing it to her.

"None of us have seen her," said Mrs. Campion,

in answer to her appeal. "She hasn't been here since the last meeting. I think you had better come home with me, Elinor. My maid is as good as a nurse."

The leader looked as if she would have liked to intervene, but Elinor agreed to the suggestion without a moment's hesitation.

"I should like that, thank you, if I won't be in the way. I don't expect that I shall want more than a day or two in bed. But I do want to see Louie. Hasn't *anybody* seen her at all?"

Nobody had. The leader, showing by her looks that she disapproved of the arrangement for Miss Giffard's going to Mrs. Campion's, yet made no verbal objection.

"I think we had better go at once," said Joan, rising with decision. "You can all see that she wants immediate treatment. I may come back. If I do not, you may count on me for being present at the demonstration at the House, provided that it is going to be a peaceful one."

"We certainly can't give any such guarantee," said the leader with curling lip. "You are sure that you really want to go with Mrs. Campion, Elinor? Say the word, and I will drive you out to Notting Hill at once myself."

"I will go with Mrs. Campion, thank you. Victoria Street is nearer, and I shall be about again in a day or two. When is this demonstration arranged for?"

"It must not be later than Monday, for the House rises for Easter next Thursday. I don't think it is likely that you will be able to take part in it, but I shall make a point of seeing you before then. Did you tell the driver to wait with the taxi?"

Elinor nodded; and, before she could again speak, she fainted clean away.

Restoratives, always kept in readiness at Headquarters for that and other emergencies, were at once applied, and she recovered in a short time. But she looked ghastly ill, almost dying, as she was helped downstairs to the waiting taxi.

Joan forbore to speak a word as they drove quickly away. She had taken the opportunity, while the others were busy seeing to the invalid, to telephone to Keziah, her faithful maid, at the flat, requesting to have a bed made ready for Miss Giffard, and also some very light refreshment.

Keziah knew exactly what to do, for she had performed the same office for her mistress on more than one occasion not so many months before.

The maid, a character in her way, disapproved of her mistress and all her works, but nevertheless remained faithful with that dogged, unquestioning faithfulness which is independent of fortune or circumstance, and which can neither be bought nor sold.

"Have you seen my brother since he was at Pennons?" was the only question that Elinor

asked, as they were held up for a moment by the traffic at Westminster.

Joan shook her head.

"I haven't; but I believe Mr. Campion has seen him, and I think he is going to Pennons for this week-end. His last visit was interrupted."

"When he goes, don't say anything about me to him. I don't want him to know anything about all this. He doesn't understand, and he never will," said Elinor, and with that she fainted dead off again, to Joan's extreme dismay.

But she recovered sufficiently to be taken up in the lift to Mrs. Campion's flat, and presently she was in Keziah's big, kind, capable hands.

"Another of 'em, ma'am?" said the maid, with grim significance. "My! She do look bad! I never seed you look as bad, Miss Joan. Dear, dear, whatever is it all for? Votes for Wimmin, or good vittles—I know which my stummick would set most store by!"

Within an hour Elinor lay, like a tired child longing for sleep, in the pretty, little spare bedroom at the back of the house, where, secure from the noise of the street, she would be able to sleep away in quiet restfulness the hours which were to restore her to fresh vigour for the fray.

Joan, who did not at all like her looks, sent for the nearest doctor, who, on his arrival, reassured her, and gave her explicit directions regarding the gradual system of feeding necessary before the

outraged and exhausted physical organs could be trusted to perform their natural functions.

That was Wednesday morning, and in the afternoon, after the doctor had gone, Joan rang up Campion at his chambers.

"That you, Dick?"

"Yes, darling," came back his answer joyously, for confidence had been restored between them for the time being, and Campion was still very much in love with his wife.

"I have something to tell you. It's about Elinor Giffard. Where is her brother, do you know?"

"At Morley's Hotel still, I believe, but he's coming down to Pennons Friday or Saturday. Giffard has become a big gun, Joan. He's to be knighted one of these days."

"Does he like the idea of that?" asked Joan, wondering what Elinor would say when she should hear of it.

"Giff is a chap who doesn't say much, so I can't exactly say. But one thing you may be sure about, and that is that he won't get swelled head over it, whatever may be the value he attaches to the honour. Well, what about his sister? I mustn't say what I think, I suppose. But I will say this, that she might easily have been a little kinder to Giffie without hurting herself."

"She's too ill at present to hurt anybody. They let her out to-day. She looks like a ghost. She's here—in this house, in bed, and I have had the

doctor. He says that all that she wants is a little care and nursing, and that, if she gets these, she won't die. I want to ask whether I may take her down to Pennons on Friday and let Jess nurse her back to health and strength ? "

" Pennons a nursing home for hunger-striking Suffragettes !—um ! " said Campion, with a laughing protest in his voice. " Of course I don't mind, provided that you give me a guarantee that she won't rise up suddenly and break up the happy home "

" Don't be silly, Dick ! She's much too ill for that."

" I am not sure about Giffard, however, Joan. He has washed his hands of her and all her works—or, rather, he thinks that he has."

" He needn't see her. Pennons is big enough to hold them both. She can be put in the west wing, if he thinks she will contaminate the air he breathes. He needn't, for that matter, even know that she is there. I want to get her out of London—between ourselves, to get her clean away from Mrs. P. and the rest. She'll die, if she's allowed to plunge again, and, personally, I don't want to have Elinor Giffard's death on my conscience."

" All right. Please yourself," answered Campion readily enough, extracting for himself some crumbs of comfort from his wife's words.

They seemed to him to point to a more lukewarm spirit on behalf of the interests of the Cause.

Besides, being naturally a kind and a hospitable man, and never happier than when keeping open house, he was delighted to offer the shelter of Pennons to a woman in need of rest and attention.

"Are you coming out to-night?" he asked when that matter was settled.

"No. I'll wait until Friday and take Elinor down. Could the car fetch us? If it could, that would be the best of all."

"Of course it could, and it will. Just ring up Pennons and tell Baffin when and where you want him."

"Thank you, dear, very much," she said, quite gratefully. "Good-bye."

Next day Louie Desmond, having observed in the *Standard* that Elinor Giffard and Polly Carey had been released by order of the Home Secretary, called at Victoria Street flat to ask how Elinor was, and whether she might see her.

Louie asked for Mrs. Campion, but, in her absence, was admitted by Keziah, who knew her as one of the intimate friends of her mistress.

"Yes, Miss, I think she can see you. She's 'ad some brekfus, and she 'as slep' all night. The doctor 'as bin 'ere too, and 'e ses we're to go on feedin' 'er up. But 'e ses too"—here Keziah lowered her voice—"that she can't go on playing pranks wiv 'erself to hall eternity. Them was his wery words, Miss. And thet pore Miss Carey they think won't git better this time. Don't say a

word to Miss Elinor about her, for I don' think she heven knows that she's bin let hout."

"They didn't come out together, then?"

"No, Miss. Hit seems not. My missus brought Miss Giffard 'ere 'erself, an' I ravver think they're goin' down to Pennons to-morrow, both of 'em, hin the motor."

"To Pennons!" repeated Louie Desmond. "That will be splendid. May I go in and see her now?"

"Yes, Miss. She's hin the little room at the back as weak as a babby an' as white as snow, but a mite better than she was yesterday."

Louie knocked lightly at the door, and her eyes filled with tears when she entered and beheld the wasted apparition among the pillows, the whiteness of which was almost shamed by the hue of her cheeks.

"Oh, Elinor, you—you bad girl! What did you promise me last time?—and your brother feeling so bad about it all! What do you suppose he would say, if he saw you look like this?"

Elinor shook her head, smiling faintly.

"Come and sit down, dear, and tell me things I want to know most awfully. What happened that night at the Kingsway? Everything seemed to be so rushed!"

"I don't know that I can give you a very connected account. In fact, you saw as much as I did. Of course it was the lights going out that

did the mischief. Some hostile units had got in—but oh, Elinor, I was frightened!"

"What for?" asked Elinor in her weak, wondering voice. "Why, you've been in much worse scrimmages and been quite cool! Whatever has come over you of late, Louie? Surely you are never going to desert us, and that, too, just on the eve of victory?"

"The eve of victory!" repeated Louie, and she clasped her hands round her knees and rocked herself a little on her chair. "You don't look much like victory, Elinor! I never—no, I never saw anyone look more ghastly. Mrs. Pankhurst's appearance was nothing to it! You'll certainly die, if you keep on as you are doing."

"That is a matter of no consequence. I begin to think that one of us will have to die before people are convinced that we will stick at nothing and that we are in deadly earnest about getting the vote. If anybody is to die, why not I as well as anybody else? I can be spared better than many, I have so few ties."

Louie's face flushed a trifle indignantly as she heard these last words.

"Elinor, I can't think how you can lie there and say such things, knowing, as you do, how fond your brother is of you, what he would do to give you a real good time, and how badly he feels about it all."

Elinor smiled a trifle bitterly.

"You must console him, since you feel so sympathetic about his disappointment in me."

Louie frowned as well as flushed indignantly.

"I only wish I had a brother like him! I'd let all the causes in the world go hang to please him!" she added, without a moment's hesitation.

"Louie, you are nothing but a broken reed; and I don't understand why you should be so after all the opportunities you have had of getting inspired and being made strong."

Louie stretched her long, thin arms mightily.

"I suppose I am—indeed, I must be—a broken reed! But I can't help seeing that we are not getting on a bit, and that, if victory ever comes, it won't be through us at all, but will be through all the sane, strong, reasonable women who can afford to work and wait quietly, just because they *are* so sane and strong and reasonable."

Elinor closed her eyes; and presently, to her dismay, Louie saw two big, slow tears force themselves from under her friend's heavy lids, and roll down her pallid cheeks.

Then she was conscience-smitten, and, dropping on her knees by the side of the bed, begged to be forgiven.

"Do you know who was at Kingsway the other night, sitting just behind me, hugely admiring you and listening with all his might to every word you spoke?"

Elinor shook her head.

"That nice man from the North, you know—your brother's friend, Mr. Howorth. And I'm just going to tell you what he said. It was that there ought to be some force strong enough to prevent women like you and Joan Campion from behaving like that. Afterwards—oh, I didn't dare to ask him what he thought!—he took me right home to the flat, and his face, I saw, was quite set and stern. Oh, Elinor, there are other things that matter—heaps of things! And we can't leave men out of our lives—we can't! It's no use. It's quite true what that American novelist made one of her characters say the other day—'My dear, remember that, whatever they may make us suffer, we can't do without the racket of men in our lives.'"

Elinor turned her face to the wall, and Louie could not see whether she was angry, or feigning sleep, or merely wearied out. But she did presently see that the two tears of chagrin were followed close by two others and that the lips were trembling to keep them company.

CHAPTER X

IN THE DUTCH GARDEN

ON Saturday afternoon Giffard went out once more to Walden to make good his interrupted visit, and he was met at the station by the cherubic-faced G. D. in the full glory of a new possession—a small and very smart Welsh pony, given to him by his step-father. To it was attached the smallest trap in the world—so small, indeed, that Giffard wondered where he was going to stow his long legs!

"I hope you don't mind my coming," said G. D. as he wrung Giffard's hand and looked up into his face with his odd, shy, winning smile. "I told the pater I was sure you wouldn't. And I wanted so awf'ly to show you how Lloyd George goes."

"Is that the pony's name?" inquired Giffard, hugely amused.

G. D. laughed out loud.

"We call him Lloyd George because he sticks at nothing. Probably we'll cut it shorter yet—as short as we've done mine. But, if he behaves himself and comes up to the scratch, perhaps we'll give him something more respectable to hang on

to. But, I say, isn't he a stunner? Yes, old chappie——"

Here he put down his round face on the pony's soft nose, and Giffard saw that a complete understanding had already been established between Lloyd George and his new master.

"Of course I'm delighted, *and* honoured as well, by your coming to meet me with your trap. But can you show me where I am to put my legs?" he added, with a look of comic despair.

"Oh, that's easy! You can hang them out at the side, if they get cramped. The mater was against my coming. She said it wasn't respectful that nobody but me should be at the station. But I knew you wouldn't mind. You don't really, do you?"

"No, my lad, I don't. On the contrary, I'm charmed," answered Giffard truly enough, for there was something in the schoolboy's affectionate comradeship which warmed his heart.

He stowed himself and his suit-case into the very small available space. G. D. then took the reins in his hands, smacked his lips with infinite relish, and off they flew.

Lloyd George certainly lived up to his reputation for speed, and Giffard thoroughly enjoyed the run, and more especially G. D.'s excellent running commentary on what constituted the points of a first-rate horse, every one of which Lloyd George of course possessed in full perfection!

To the homeless man there was something very homely about this unspoiled English schoolboy, and he was the only one of Campion's numerous possessions which he actually envied.

They arrived at Pennons at tea-time, and both Campion and his wife were waiting in the porch to welcome him.

Nothing could have been finer in its way than the flourish with which G. D. brought Lloyd George across the drawbridge and the fine style in which he drew him up in the courtyard. It made them all smile.

As Giffard bent over the hand of his hostess, he was once more impressed by her gracious charm, and, before the tea was over, he began to understand in some degree, at least, the infatuation which had induced Campion to run the undoubted risk of an alliance with such a pronounced and conspicuous Suffragette.

No pleasanter half-hour could have been imagined than that spent over the tea-table in the wide house-place, during which the talk was all of simple things, which were enlivened by G. D.'s continual chatter.

He was in the seventh heaven of delight, for he had got his mother home and away from what he irreverently called "these beastly women," and his stepfather and Jessy Devine, in a word, his whole family circle, which was at present all his world, safely under the roof of his new home, which had not yet ceased to be a wonder-place to G. D.

His attitude of mind towards Campion was one of infinite respect and reverent gratitude, and he was jealous with a great jealousy lest either he himself or his mother should fail in giving adequate expression to these feelings. This consideration was so unusual in a boy that Giffard couldn't help inferring that G. D.'s experience, previous to his adoption by Campion, must have been one of exceptional bitterness.

All the time his visit lasted he did not get away from the pathetic side of G. D.'s character—not even when he was laughing over his fresh and vivid comments on everything under heaven.

A second meeting with Jessy Devine did not remove Giffard's former unfavourable impression of her, but indeed rather deepened it. She was so quietly demure, so obviously, even rather insistently deferential to Joan that it created in him a feeling of distrust which almost amounted to a certainty that for some selfish, if not wicked, end, she was playing a part.

That afternoon, for some unexplained reason, she had elected to appear in nurse's garb, which she wore with infinite becomingness. Giffard was to learn a little later in the evening the reason why she had donned it. Meanwhile he was quite conscious of watching her, especially as she revealed herself to him in her attitude towards the master of the house, and he found himself wondering why he had disliked and distrusted all the women

with reddish hair and greenish eyes that he had ever met.

"Will you come and see my Dutch garden?" his hostess asked him when someone from the town called to see Campion and he left the little circle.

Giffard said he would be charmed, and they went off together, G. D., after consuming an enormous tea, having departed to see that Lloyd George was having his full meed of attendance at the stables.

Joan went out of doors without putting on a hat or throwing a scarf over her pretty, well-fitting frock of fine blue serge, and the sun caught her hair, revealing its depth and richness, and was kind, without mercilessness, to her fine complexion.

"I was so glad for Dick's sake that you could come down again so soon, Mr. Giffard. I really think you are the very dearest friend he has in the world."

"We were once inseparable; but eleven years of absence from one's country, especially when unrelieved by any communication with one's friends, makes the time seem very long, Mrs. Campion. As a matter of fact, it will be twelve in October since I went to Lotali. But I'm thankful to say that in some ways even a period of twelve years is easy to bridge. In Dick's case there has been no difficulty at all in that way. What a beautiful place you have here! Twelve years ago Dick's chances of succession to Pennons

were, I think, a little remote. I don't believe indeed that they ever entered into his calculation when we were at Jesus together."

"Ah, no—he was the third son. The Campions as a family suffered hideously through the South African War. Dick lost his two elder brothers and three of his cousins. He and Admiral Campion's son are the only men now left."

Her voice was very tender and sympathetic, and the expression on her face was soft and lovely. It was impossible to doubt that she loved the man of whom she was speaking, and yet—and—yet——

Giffard's idea of what a woman's love should be, fostered as it had been by his early training and experience, was that it was a self-sacrificing affection which spent itself entirely on others. His own father—an undoubtedly good man and an excellent parish priest—had had a violent and trying temper, the frequent outbreaks of which had sent many clouds rolling over the horizon of their home life. But, looking back, Giffard could not remember that he had ever once seen his mother's sweet serenity ruffled. She had borne all the trials and sufferings of her lot in silence so complete that he could not recall a single instance of recrimination or rebellion against much injustice and oppression of the petty, but harassing, kind inflicted by the domestic tyrant.

"I want to tell you how much I like your boy, Mrs. Campion," he said presently, feeling it a relief

to get away from the tension of the moment. "He is perfectly delightful, and I am uncommonly pleased that he does me the honour to approve of me."

She smiled happily.

"G. D. is at the hero-worshipping stage, and I am glad that he has found a hero so worthy of his regard," she said, with a slight but charming bow. "He is a happy creature, and I am afraid that Dick is spoiling him outrageously. Both he and I," she added, with a soft, threatening break in her voice, "are profoundly grateful for and appreciative of the happiness of Pennons.

"This way, Mr. Giffard," she resumed, after a pause of some length. "Have you ever seen a box hedge like this—seven feet high? It is one of the sights of this part of the county, and all sorts of interested folk—botanists, gardeners, antiquarians and so forth—come from far and near to make a study of it. It was planted by Dame Cicely Campion in Queen Elizabeth's time. Isn't it lovely? And what an incomparable setting for the Dutch garden it makes!"

It shut in the garden so effectually that, once within the gate, one had a sense of remoteness. But, while he admired the trim parterres characteristic of the formal garden, Giffard said he preferred the open.

"Of course this is purely formal and artificial, but nevertheless it is interesting as a relic of the

past," she said, understanding him fully. "There is always shelter and privacy here. Shall we sit down for a little over by the sundial? The air is very mild this evening, and it looks as if we are going to have fine sunny weather for the Easter holidays."

They walked together up the smooth, well-rolled path and presently sat down on the quaint stone seat by the sundial, from which they had a complete view of the old-world pleasaunce which represented some odd whimsy of the bygone châtelaine of Pennons.

Then, after a brief silence, Joan said without a word of preface and with a slight nervousness, "Mr. Giffard, your sister is here, in this house."

Giffard started and half rose from his seat.

"In this house! But I thought she was in Holloway," he said hardly.

"They let her out on Wednesday. They had to because of her health. She came to my flat in Victoria Street, and, with the doctor's leave, I motored her down here last night."

Giffard's expression immediately and completely changed.

"I suppose," he said, with obvious difficulty, "that she has brought this particular form of helplessness and dependence upon herself by her own folly."

Joan waited a moment, as if trying to find a suitable answer.

"I know how difficult it must be for you to have sympathy with our point of view, or even understanding of it—the point of view of Elinor and myself and of all the other women who are out on this crusade," she said at length very gently, for she was sorry for the evident distress into which her words had thrown the man by her side.

"I don't want to understand, and as for sympathy, I have none. Since the day on which I returned to England I have never got away from this ghastly nightmare, and my one longing is to be quit of it for ever."

He spoke with a touch of frank brutality, being for the moment a perfectly natural man, too much incensed to disguise his feelings. But she did not in the slightest degree resent either his manner or his speech.

"You will go up and see Elinor?" she said, with a slightly pleading air. "I only ventured to tell her after she awoke from her afternoon sleep that you were coming to-day."

Giffard said neither yea nor nay.

"I thought she would get better more quickly down here than anywhere else. My cousin Jessy is such a splendid nurse, and she is so very glad to have an opportunity of exercising her gifts in her old profession. She was one of the best nurses Dr. Delorme ever had. He could never say enough in her praise."

Giffard strolled away down the path, looking as

if his interest in this recital of Miss Devine's good qualities was of a very languid order.

Quite suddenly he came back and stood in front of Mrs. Campion, fixing her with his deep, serious eyes.

"Mrs. Campion, you are a perfectly reasonable and well-balanced woman in most other directions. I can't for the life of me understand how you have ever come to identify yourself with this revolt against law and order. A legitimate demand for the vote I could easily understand. Can't you see that you and your colleagues are defeating your own ends, that you are keeping victory back? If it ever comes, it will be a concession to the constitutional party among the women suffragists. No responsible Government would ever be coerced into giving you the franchise. Why, such a display of weakness would imperil their very existence!"

"But, you see," said Joan quietly, "it is not concessions we are seeking from persons who have favours and benefits to bestow, but simple rights that have been too long withheld from us. You will admit that there is a difference."

"You might as well argue that the children playing in the gutter have rights," he remonstrated. "Since I came back to England I have heard that the school-children struck for what they imagined to be their rights—more holidays, shorter hours, fewer lessons, and the like! Would you, then, admit that they acted quite reasonably,

that they should be taken seriously and have their so-called grievances considered? "

Joan smiled a trifle sadly. These were such old, old arguments, though Giffard brought them forward in perfect good faith as the most natural and telling that occurred to him at the moment.

"Thank you very much for the comparison. I know it is neither a new nor a flattering one. But I think when you've been a little while longer in England and have had time to view and study the question from some other standpoint that you will begin to grasp the fact that this Movement is a big thing—the biggest our civilization has ever seen—and that it has got to be reckoned with, in fact, that it is being reckoned with now quite seriously."

Giffard remained uncomfortably silent for a moment, recalling the frequent and always futile discussions at Godalming, which had always ended in confusion, dismay, and an avowed sense of helplessness.

"The Government is at its wits' end," went on Joan, quietly triumphant, "and our resources are as rich and varied as they have ever been. That argument of yours about the constitutional party won't hold. When victory comes—and it is coming; there is nothing surer!—it will be the absolute result of what the sufferers—Elinor and her comrades—have borne and done. There is nothing surer than that, either! I know what I am talking about."

"But the Movement makes for confusion and misery and dissension everywhere. Even you will admit that it is a canker in hundreds of homes already?"

"I do admit that it has made dispeace. But what did our Lord and Master say when He walked with men, regarding His own religion, which He came to suffer for as well as to teach? He said 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.' And that is the watchword of every great reform in its infancy."

"But what *are* the wrongs of women?" he insisted with a curious pertinacity, still pressing his argument.

"Oh, Mr. Giffard, you are no child. You are a man. You have seen the world. You have studied racial and economic questions. You know the methods of legislators and governments—yet you would ask such a question! Why, their name is legion. Everywhere, in every country in the world, it is the woman who pays physically, mentally and spiritually. It is to remove some of the inequalities of sex and the evils attendant upon them that we are out for and—thanks be to God!—already there are signs of the dawn."

"The limitations of sex," corrected Giffard doggedly. "But these are entirely outside your jurisdiction, or that, indeed, of any human authority. They have been set immutably by

God since the creation of the world. The task you have set yourselves is, in the very nature of things, beyond your powers of accomplishing, Mrs. Campion. You will find yourself defeated by Nature at every turn."

"I should like to join issue with you there," she said warmly. "Hitherto women have accepted the so-called limitations set for them not by God but by man, simply because they lacked education and initiative, organization and articulate voice. This Movement has given them these, and, when once our political disability is removed, no man, or woman either, can forecast what an immense difference and improvement it will make in political, in commercial, and in social and private life! There will be equal rights for all, irrespective of sex, and the securing of these will work a bloodless and glorious revolution."

She spoke with the enthusiasm of the prophet, and the assurance of the thinker who is unvisited by doubt.

Giffard, feeling the futility of pursuing the subject, though he could not disguise his interest in it, inquired whether he could now go to the house to see his sister.

"Yes, of course. I hope I need not remind you that a person so weak as she is does not want argument or—or badgering. I may say, indeed, that she rather dreaded your coming and that it was arranged between us that you weren't to

be told of her being here. It occurred to me, however, since you came down that Dick might blurt out the secret. So I thought that it would be as well that I should tell you, and she reluctantly assented."

She smiled upon him as they turned together down the trim path by the box-hedge, and the sunshine of that smile made Giffard wonder afresh at the vivid force of her words. He felt sorrier than ever for Campion, and he wondered what would be the upshot of it all.

Joan herself took him by strange, winding passages to the old west wing, where two sunny and beautiful rooms had been prepared for the invalid. She left him at the door, with her finger on her lips as she turned away, reminding him thus mutely that he was to be on his best behaviour and to keep guard over his tongue.

He tapped lightly, and without waiting for invitation, entered the room, where he was startled to behold Elinor actually in bed, lying prone among pillows, her face wearing a peaceful expression, but very pinched and drawn and white.

"Good God, Elinor, my dear!" he said, as he closed the door and stepped to the bedside. "What in the world have you been doing to yourself?"

"Don't ask any questions, Ted, but just come and sit by me and talk nicely to me," she said, with a faintly nervous smile. "Isn't it queer that we

should meet in this house? Mrs. Campion only told me before tea that you were expected to-day."

"My last visit was interrupted, so I really came to make good," he said, as he drew in a chair. "You do look ghastly! My—my dear, is your Cause worth all the suffering you are bearing?"

His tone was kind and pitiful, and her face flushed, because she was touched to the quick.

"I am sorry you mind it all so dreadfully. But it is quite worth it and far more than all that the best of us can do or bear. If we were not certain of that, we should not be out for the Cause at all."

"But, Elinor, if you keep on this sort of thing your constitution won't stand it—it will break down entirely. Why, you have changed most frightfully in little more than a week, though I didn't think your appearance, when I saw you first, was anything to boast of."

"If one of us has to go just to prove that we are all in earnest, will it matter very much which of us it is? I could so easily be spared."

Giffard uttered an impatient "Tchut!" and walked across the room and back again twice before venturing on further speech.

"Don't let us talk any more about me," she said, stretching out one long, white, beautiful hand, on which the blue veins showed rather conspicuously. "Sit down and tell me what you have done to Louie. She came to see me yesterday—no, it was Thursday—and rated me even more soundly than you have

done. I think I am going to find it rather hard to forgive you for undermining my good comrade's faith and trust in me."

"They didn't need much undermining, I fancy," he answered rather grimly. "She doesn't believe much in the Cause. Why, one of the first sentences she said when I saw her at the flat on the morning after our outing at the theatre was that she was fed up with it!"

Elinor smiled.

"I suppose she can't help it. It is due partly to her nationality and partly to other things. But you will find Mrs. Campion to be made of different stuff. Tell me, what do you think of her?"

Giffard was spared the necessity of replying, for, with a slight knock, Jessy Devine entered the room.

"So sorry to disturb you, Mr. Giffard. But Mr. Campion wants you very particularly in the library. Could you go down now?"

Giffard, rather relieved on the whole by this summons, said he would go at once.

CHAPTER XI

THE CANDIDATE

GIFFARD, now fairly familiar with the house, made his way to the library without difficulty. Great was his astonishment to find half a dozen men in the room with Campion, who stood before the fire-place with his hands clasped under his coat tails and an odd, self-conscious expression on his face.

" Ah, come in, Giffard. I thought I'd like your support on this occasion, which has taken me slightly by surprise. Gentlemen, my friend, Mr. Edward Giffard. Sir Winston Scoresby and Mr. Benthall, I think, you already know," he said, turning to Giffard. " Allow me to make known to you Captain Windsor, Mr. Longford, Mr. Pellatt, and Mr. Reginald Brace, Mayor of Walden."

Giffard briefly acknowledged these introductions, and then stood back, at once interested and surprised by the occasion. He gathered that these gentlemen formed a deputation of some kind, and he waited with considerable curiosity for further enlightenment.

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Campion, addressing the deputation, "this is a very great honour you propose to confer on me"—and as he spoke there was an odd catch in his voice. "These gentlemen, Giffard, represent the Unionist Association of the Eastern Division of the County, and they have done me the honour of asking me to stand for the Division."

"Delighted to hear it," observed Giffard heartily; and he wondered why, at the words, Sir Winston Scoresby should promptly shake his head.

The Mayor of Walden, who, for certain private and delicate reasons, had been chosen to be the spokesman of the deputation, then stood forward to take up again the thread of his discourse, which had been dropped on the entrance of Giffard.

He was a large, substantial person with side whiskers and a rather pompous air. He had made a considerable fortune in the malting business, and he was regarded as a shrewd, far-sighted man, a keen politician, and a most excellent mayor, who was now filling the office for the third year in succession.

He had been a very successful man, though his social advancement had not kept pace with his ambitions. He was the son of a small greengrocer in Walden—a place much too conservative and old-fashioned to overlook the damaging social fact. Brace did not mind very much for himself the exhibition of the cold shoulder by the local blue-blooded magnates; but his wife, who came from

Colchester, and his three daughters were most anxious to get into County Society, and had left no stone unturned to effect their purpose.

But the desired goal seemed as far off as ever. Brace was a universal favourite, and, though most people had now and again a laugh at his little idiosyncrasies, all were agreed as to the excellent qualities he possessed.

Walden had flourished under his Mayoralty, and never had public funds been so liberally supported. In addition, he was a fluent, if slightly verbose, speaker, and it was impossible to put him either out of countenance or out of temper, this imperturbability being an asset worth untold gold to the mayor of a provincial town.

"Now we may get on with the business, Mr. Campion," he said as he settled his heavy gold-pince-nez on his somewhat tell-tale nose. "Lord Francis Quenby has definitely resigned, and he has informed us that on no consideration will he contest the seat again. He has also told us that he wishes to be released at once, as he is sailing for California in the autumn with his daughter. In view of the fact that a general election is looming ahead, he very properly points out that it would be most unwise and imprudent to leave the constituency without an active member; and so, as I have said, he wants to vacate the seat at once so as to allow of his successor appearing before the constituency without any unnecessary delay."

"Right—quite right," murmured Mr. Benthall. "But his lordship has ever been most jealous for the rights of the electors of the Eastern Division."

"That is so," beamed Mr. Brace in full unison. "It may interest, and perhaps influence you, Mr. Campion, to be informed that yours is the only name mentioned by Lord Francis as that of the man whom he would like to be his successor."

Campion's face expressed that he was at once pleased and touched. Lord Francis Quenby was an old man, and they did not meet often, but Campion knew that this scion of a noble family had an interest in him, which had its origin in a bygone romance of which no one present except himself was aware.

Campion's mother, before she married the third son of Pennons, then considered an ineligible *parti* on account of his poverty, had been offered the chance of a brilliant settlement in life in the shape of a proposal from Lord Francis, second son of the then Marquis of Danby. But she had refused him and had remained true to the penniless lieutenant. Quenby had afterwards married out of a sense of duty to his family, but he had never forgotten the beautiful Lucy St. Leger, Dick's mother. For her sake he had always taken a deep interest in Campion, and he had once, in a moment of unusual confidence, told him the reason.

"I am fully conscious of the compliment paid me by Lord Francis," said Campion in rather full

tones, " and no less of the honour you, as representing his constituency, propose to confer on me. I can only answer that it will give me the very greatest pleasure to become a candidate, and I hope, for your sakes as well as my own, that we shall have a successful issue to the contest, if there should be one."

This speech was received with the usual " Hear, hear." But Giffard, listening intently in the background, fancied some slight restraint in the expression of their approval.

The Mayor cleared his throat, and, looking round a trifle nervously, as if requiring and soliciting the support of his fellow-deputationists, again took speech in hand.

" Your answer, I need not assure you, gives us the utmost satisfaction, Mr. Campion. But—but I have still a part of my duty to discharge—less pleasant, I am sorry to say, but in the opinion of this Committee, which fully represents the constituency, of hardly less importance."

Here he paused for a moment to wipe his brow with his handkerchief.

" Well ? " said Campion with a slight curtness, " I am waiting to hear what you have to say."

" It concerns a lady for whom we have all the highest respect and whom we believe to be actuated by the most single-hearted motives," went on the Mayor in his most grandiloquent style. " I refer to Mrs. Campion. We have a small

proviso to make—a condition to attach to our offer, the reasonableness of which will no doubt be at once manifest to you, Mr. Campion. It is merely that Mrs. Campion will dissociate herself from the Militant Branch of the Suffragist Movement and take her place by your side in the way usually expected of the wife of a candidate. Unless she does so, it is to be feared that your chances of success would be small. Indeed, gentlemen, I think we are agreed that they would be practically nil."

"Right you are, Brace," said Sir Winston Scoresby bluntly. "But we are all sure that this condition has only to be submitted to Mr. Campion in black-and-white, so to speak, to be accepted by him."

Giffard stepped farther back. He felt his own face flushing and he hardly dared to glance at Dick. The position was awkward, even in a sense humiliating. Likewise, it was crucial, because undoubtedly it was of the nature of an ultimatum which, after due consideration and consultation over the situation, they were offering for his acceptance or rejection.

"Lord Francis Quenby told me he would write to you on these lines, Mr. Campion," began Mr. Brace, pausing to give Campion an opportunity of replying before he went further.

"He has not written," replied Campion curtly.

It was easy to see that he was labouring under

considerable stress of feeling. Giffard even imagined that his temper had got a little jagged. But in this he was quite wrong. Campion was fully aware of the temper of the County regarding this vexed question and not surprised at the line they had taken.

"I suppose, gentlemen," he observed when he had slightly recovered himself, "you are prepared to give me a reasonable time for consideration—at least, a few days?"

Brace glanced round inquiringly.

"Oh, certainly," said the Rector, who, next to Brace, was the best spokesman in the company. "A week, say. Could you give us a definite answer and guarantee in a week?"

There was a certain emphasis in the Rector's use of the word *guarantee* which gave Giffard a slight insight into the wheels within wheels which govern the ethics of provincial society. He understood that Campion's wife had already trampled on a good many of the susceptibilities of the County and that they would welcome a chance to put her in her place.

It was all a very pretty comedy, which Giffard would have keenly enjoyed in the ordinary way; only, as it happened, his interest in the question at issue was of rather a poignant and personal kind.

He waited almost feverishly to hear what line Campion would take, and it was an undoubted relief that he asked for time.

" I can let you know definitely by the first post on Tuesday morning," said Campion quietly, and, with various nods and murmured hopes, the deputation expressed its willingness to wait.

Before it took its departure, Mr. Brace delivered himself of a final burst of eloquence.

" I am sure I am voicing not only the hopes of this Association, of which I have the honour to be chairman, but also the hopes of this wide and important constituency in urging you, Mr. Campion, to leave no stone unturned to gratify the electors by your triumphant return. The name you bear is beloved in Walden, and far beyond its narrow limits. Your own reputation at the Bar is high and rapidly rising. I repeat it, it is the prayer of all your friends and neighbours that you will leave no stone unturned to remove every difficulty from the path so that we may have the honour and pleasure of returning a Campion of Pennons victorious at the head of a tremendous poll."

The Mayor, figuratively speaking, stood down and the interview was over.

When Campion came back from the door-step, he closed the door with a nervous hand.

" Giffie, how did I come out of it? It was a surprise; for though I spoke of it to you the other night, I thought the possibility was far enough off. I think Lord Francis might have given me an inkling. I can't think why he didn't. You heard what Brace said about his having written to me? "

He broke off there, and Giffard wondered, observing his expression, whether the thought that his wife might have kept back the letter had occurred.

He dismissed the idea hastily, however—as Campion did—realizing that Joan was incapable of such an act.

"You came quite well out of it, old chap. But you are in a fix. What do you suppose will be the issue?"

"It can have but one issue, Giffie; or, by God, there will be the devil to pay!" answered Campion, and the rising flush on his temples proclaimed the intensity of his feeling. "This is a chance which doesn't come twice in any man's life. It's the chance I've been waiting and working for. Politics is my *métier*. I know that nothing could bar my progress when I once get in. I've had the offer of trumpery constituencies before, but I was waiting for this. When a man's own county asks him to stand and is prepared to stand by him almost to a man, that's something worth living for."

"It's a foregone conclusion that you would head the poll, then?"

"Yes, unless they make it into a three-cornered affair—but that's unthinkable! I needn't say that, either, for such things are happening every day. See how Wyatt was chucked for Midshire, where his people had reigned supreme for two centuries!"

Campion came to an end abruptly, and his expression changed.

"Giffie, you don't think Joan could possibly fail me? Hang it, could any woman refuse to stand by her husband in such a case?"

Giffard rather helplessly shook his head.

"A fortnight ago I should have had only one answer. In fact, not a doubt could have entered, but now I don't know. When will you tell her?"

"To-night—now, in fact. We shall be going up to dress presently."

"I was wondering, while they were speaking, how it would have done to have brought Mrs. Campion in," said Giffard slowly. "It might have impressed the occasion on her mind, don't you know?"

Campion looked doubtful.

"It takes a good deal to impress Joan. She would probably have laughed at old Brace. She thinks them all archaic down here. Well, I suppose we'd better go up. Eight o'clock dinner and it's twenty past seven now."

Giffard's dressing was rather a casual, distracted affair that evening, and he found himself trying to put on two ties at one time.

His thoughts wandered persistently to the other part of the house—to the room, in which, presumably, Campion and his wife were having it out. He was convinced, by the odd sinking of his heart and the persistent gloom of his thoughts, that the

struggle was likely to be a bitter, if not a hopeless, one.

He was right.

When Campion entered his dressing-room he could hear his wife and her maid conversing in the inner room, and he put his head round the door to see at what stage her toilet was.

"You won't be long, Joan? I want to talk to you before we go down."

"You can come in now. Rowley has finished my hair. I will ring, Rowley, when I come to the fastenings," said Joan, with her charming smile.

The maid slipped decorously through the farther door, and Campion stepped into his wife's room.

"Did you hear that a deputation had arrived?" he asked nervously.

"Jessy said something about it," she answered, still smiling. "What did they want?"

"Can't you guess, Joan? They came from the Unionist Association. Brace is their chairman. Lord Francis has resigned, and they ask me to stand."

Joan's face became illumined, and with a lovely smile she threw her arms round his neck.

"Darling, I'm so glad and proud! Of course you accepted? It has been the dream of your life, I know."

Campion strained her to him and looked into her beautiful, serious eyes, and laid his hand with a slightly pleading touch on her hair.

"When we married we loved each other dearly, didn't we, Joan? Have I disappointed you as a husband?"

"No, Dick. You have been perfect—quite perfect—and I had no idea till I became your wife that there could be such happiness in the world!"

"Well, if you care like that, a little sacrifice should be easy," he said as he kissed her. "I won't play about. I only wanted to make sure. I was horribly afraid before I saw you, Joan. But now I know you are going to stand by me."

"Why, of course. There is nothing in the world I shall enjoy more than electioneering."

"And I'm sure you would excel in it," he answered lightly, yet with the same note of strain in his voice. "They gave me a very cordial—in fact a unanimous invitation. But there is a condition attached——"

"Well?"

"It is that you dissociate yourself from the Women's Movement. You can't be surprised, knowing as much as you do of the constituency."

Her expression changed. The brightness died out of her face and it looked blank, cold, even forbidding.

"And what did you say to that monstrous proposal?"

"What could I say?" he asked, repelled by her choice of an adjective. "I said I would lay

the matter before you without delay, and give them an answer by Tuesday morning."

"You need not have kept them waiting. Why, Dick, you must have known that what they ask is impossible!"

"I didn't think so—I do not think so now."

She stood a little way back from him, and her eyes, full of a mournful sadness mixed with a fine indignation, looked steadily into his.

"I said 'monstrous,' and I repeat it," she said quietly. "They don't understand, of course, and one has to forgive much to ignorance. Why, if I were to do that in the face of what other women are doing and suffering for the Cause, I shouldn't be fit to live!"

He shrugged his shoulders, and an expression of infinite bitterness darkened his face.

"That, I may take it, is your answer, then?"

"It must be—it has to be. Why, Dick, don't you know that it is for the down-trodden and the suffering and the sad that we are working, and don't you see what a chance you have now to be on the side of honour and right and justice?"

"I suppose you are suggesting that I might contest the Division as the Women's candidate—good Lord!"

"I think that, if you would let me go through the campaign with you, and make Votes for Women one of the issues, you would do honour to yourself and show the world a fine object-lesson."

"Yes, the object-lesson would be yours truly! Only, happily for his own self-respect, he would never be allowed to put himself into such a position. What does the County, or the country, for that matter, at large—care for your Cause?" he demanded as his temper rose—"not a tuppeny dam'! And you, with your intellect and common-sense, know it far better than I can tell you! We've got to leave it out of the count, Joan, and come down to the plain issue, which is simply this; Can I, or can I not, count on you to stand by me through this election? Given a fair chance, I'll get in—there's nothing surer. But, unless you give the pledge they require, they won't even nominate me. That is exactly where we stand."

Joan Campion clasped her hands together; her fingers nervously interlacing showed the extreme nervousness under which she was labouring.

"Dick," she said in a low, poignant voice, "I can't do it. You oughtn't to ask me. It isn't fair!—it isn't fair. I hid nothing from you that night in Victoria Street, when you refused to take 'No' for an answer. You said then that you would have me in spite of all the Suffragists in the world, and I asked you whether you would pay the price and be content with half a wife until our victory came. And you remember what you said? It is not I who am breaking the bond, but you. Yet they say that women have no standard of honour!"

"I trusted to time to make things clear. Marriage can't be like that, Joan—a semi-detached business. It must be all or nothing—whole heaven or whole hell."

"I have had the hell," she answered slowly. "But now I think heaven, if it is not a chimera of dreams, is too far away for mortal grip."

"We are getting away from the main issue," he said impatiently, for Joan in such a mood was dangerous to a man's strength of will. "You don't realize that this is my chance, that the path from the Bar to the Woolsack—shall we say?—is straight through the Parliamentary gate. It is my right I'm asking, Joan, the right of every man to his wife's first duty."

"There will be other chances," she said a trifle hardly.

"You are wrong. There will be no other—at least, none such as I would care to touch. For, if I refuse this offer, I shall be a marked man henceforth—merely the husband of a Suffragette!"

She laughed then, and the sound, in spite of its poignant note, maddened Campion. He turned on his heel, strode into his own room, and banged the door.

Somewhere downstairs the hollow sound of a gong reminded them that dinner would shortly be served.

Dinner has to be eaten in the Englishman's home, though the heavens should fall.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT IS MY DUTY?

BREEDING undoubtedly tells.

Nobody could have gathered from Campion or his wife that night at table that they had come fresh from such a scene.

There was a little more gravity than usual, perhaps; but G. D., promoted to late dinner, in honour of his first evening suit, cheerfully filled in all the voids.

Jessy Devine, too, was more animated than usual, and Giffard was made aware by his inner consciousness that she was intently watching Campion and Joan, and that she was most certainly not less acutely interested in what had passed between them than he was.

That the entire meal of five excellent courses was got through without the most remote allusion to the deputation was in itself ominous. Giffard found himself longing for, yet dreading, the first opportunity Dick would have of acquainting him with Joan's decision.

He saw a sadness in her eyes, and more than

once she answered irrelevantly some remark made to her—sure sign that her spirit was inwardly perturbed. Usually she was alert, vivid, interested in the smallest detail affecting even the least important member of her household.

Campion's face was decidedly stern, but the husband and wife were quite courteous to each other and certainly not less solicitous than usual for the comfort and well-being of their guest.

Immediately dessert was placed on the table, Joan asked to be excused. Miss Devine and G. D. of course had no alternative but to leave with her; and Campion, who opened the door for them to pass out, was extremely careful about its closing.

Then he turned to Giffard and said briefly, with that haste with which a man of his temperament seeks sympathy: "She's gone back on me, Giffie. I never thought she would—but she has!"

He filled himself a full glass of port and drank it off. Then he dropped into the chair nearest Giffard and looked at him rather helplessly.

"Absolutely," he nodded. "She has refused—made no bones about it, either! Talked the most highfalutin nonsense about honour and justice and the like, and ended by inviting me to run as the Women's candidate! Funny, Giffie—eh? Beastly funny, if it wasn't so damned tragic!"

Giffard did not know what to say.

"Perhaps she spoke on the spur of the moment, being taken by surprise," he suggested.

"Nothing of the kind. She was as cool as a cucumber and appeared to think that my career and prospects are matters of no importance. I feel as if everything were smashed up, Giffie; and all that is left to me is to write to Brace, regretting my inability to stand. Then I shall be the laughing-stock of the County and the Party, and will find myself socially and politically damned."

"You won't do anything in a hurry, Dick?" counselled Giffard as he ran his long, slender fingers through his hair. "They gave you till Tuesday, didn't they? A lot can happen before then."

"Nothing will happen that will alter her decision. I tell you she's as hard as adamant. You have no idea till you come up against it what a hold this thing has taken on women and how it has changed their very natures!"

"I have a little idea, I think," answered Giffard with his faint, melancholy smile. "You forget—my sister is in bed, upstairs in this house, through it."

"Of course. I'd forgotten. She'll bolster up Joan, of course. It's awful, Giffie, really, the lengths to which they'll go for a mistaken ideal. Your sister has just come out of prison. Did she treat you to any personal details?"

"I asked for none, nor did I want them," answered Giffard briefly.

"Joan treated me to a few. She told me of the vermin in the cells and other trifling incidents of

the same order. Yet she is ready to go back! She would have been back by now but for the half-promise which she gave me and which quite evidently she already regrets. Can you conceive how nicely-nurtured women like your sister and my wife can bring themselves to suffer this personal degradation?"

"I begin to understand it, in a sense," admitted Giffard. "They are carried away by the mistaken idea that their personal suffering is somehow going to be for the healing of the nations. We are up against something which we don't know how to deal with, and which will have to right itself."

"And in the process some of us will be ground to powder! I wish you could help me out, Giffie. Do you see any hope?"

"I did not hear Mrs. Campion's views on the subject."

"But there is no reason why you should not hear them. There is all to-morrow."

"You would have no objection to my discussing the subject with her, then?"

"Good heavens, no! It will soon be the breakfast-table topic for the County," said Campion grimly. "I'd like you to talk to her about it. You'll have every opportunity to-morrow. I'll see that you get it."

Giffard did not look particularly exhilarated at the prospect, but he did not shrink from it. It was no less than his duty to put in a good word for this

friend, if he had it in his power. But he doubted the efficacy of any word he could possibly speak to Joan Campion on such a subject.

Jessy Devine, consumed with curiosity regarding what had happened in the library and afterwards, hoped to get it out of Joan in the hall, where they usually took coffee.

But Joan did not linger.

"I'm going to see Miss Giffard, Jessy," said Joan, pausing on the lowest step of the gallery stair, the long, straight folds of her wine-coloured velvet frock sweeping gracefully about her feet. "You haven't settled her for the night yet, I suppose. I can have ten minutes."

"If you don't excite her," said Miss Devine, who, wearing nurse's garb still, assumed her air of professional authority with it. "Hadn't I better come up with you and see how she is?"

"I think not," said Joan quietly. "I'm not a fool, Jessy. I shall see at a glance whether I can talk or not."

She moved slowly up the stairs, and G. D., flat on the tiger-skin before the log fire, with the latest issue of *The Captain* in front of him, looked at Jessy with a grin.

"One for you, Jess! It's your side the mater can't stand. You put it on with these clothes—nothing but swank, you know, because you loathed them before you came here when you had to wear 'em."

G. D. was nothing if not frank; and, though he liked Jessy after a fashion, because she had always been more or less in his life, he had small reverence for her. Also, he read certain little characteristics of hers with a clearness of vision which would have astonished her.

"Just swank before Mr. Giffard!" he persisted, continuing his programme of teasing. "But he isn't having any, for he 'ain't a marryin' man.'"

"I'll box your ears, G. D., in a minute," said Miss Devine, as she sat down on the lowest step of the stairs and leaned her elbows on her knees.

She liked to feel the softness of her palms against her cheek. They had been work-hardened in the old days; but Dick Campion's money had secured immunity from menial tasks for them.

Was she grateful? We shall see.

"Say, G. D., did you know a deputation came to see the pater to-night just before dinner?"

"I saw old Brace's motor," answered G. D. with but a languid interest; "a disgustin' Ford too. What did they want?"

"I'm nearly certain they want him to stand for Parliament."

"Oh, good! That would be rippin', Then we'd have tea on the Terrace—wouldn't we?—and do a swank at the troopin' of the colours, and all that rot."

Jessy, perceiving that G. D. was not in the least inclined to serious or speculative conversation,

opened the organ, and, seating herself, began to play low and softly one of her favourite bits from Beethoven.

Joan Campion's face, as she made her way to the west wing, wore an expression of profound gravity. She realized the seriousness of the position, and it hurt her to be at variance with her husband, whom, after seven months of marriage, she loved with a strength and passion which surprised herself.

But with such a woman love is not synonymous with selfishness. It was not sufficient for her—as it was for Campion—that she was happy with him. Nay, her very happiness had deepened, if that were possible, her personal devotion to the Cause. Because she was happy—then her debt and obligation were all the greater. She had none of the sheltered woman's blind carelessness regarding the great sum of human misery outside the gates of her Paradise. It behoved her, out of gratitude, to work all the harder so that the women fighting in the open against heavy odds—against sweating, inadequate return for labour in the market-place and in the home, and unjust and unjustifiable hardships in every walk of life—might taste a little happiness too.

Elinor Giffard's faint smile of sweetness and welcome comforted her as she entered the pretty room and closed the door.

She was sitting up among her pillows, and her

face was a trifle less pallid than it had been when first she arrived at Pennons.

"I am feeling ever so much better already, Mrs. Campion," she said, as she stretched out her hand to the beautiful, gracious figure standing by her bed. "I'm sure I must have slept about seven hours to-day. Eat and sleep and get well—that's the programme, I suppose?"

Joan nodded and smiled, patted the slim, white hand, and finally sat down on the side of the bed.

"You must get well fast, dear, because none of us can be spared. Something unforeseen has happened to me to-night—something which, I find, I was not quite prepared for."

"What?" asked Elinor, and her eyes began to glow with their old fire.

"You ought not to hear any controversial matter, really, but I must just tell you the facts. A deputation waited on Mr. Campion this evening to ask him to stand for the County."

Elinor's face expressed the keen interest she felt.

"In the Unionist interest of course?"

"Of course. He took it as a great compliment, for I believe I am right in saying that to represent his own county has been the dream of his life."

"He has accepted then?"

"He was not in a position to do so, because they had a condition to lay down. Can't you guess it, Elinor?"

"Something to do with you?"

Joan nodded.

"They'll give him the seat—or, rather, nominate him—solely on condition that I abjure the Cause."

Elinor sat forward, her eyes eager, her face beginning to flush.

"But you won't, Mrs. Campion?"

Joan shook her head.

"My dear, could I? You and I, who know what it stands for and who believe that we have been called to the work, realize that it would be impossible."

Both were silent then, but their thoughts were busy.

Elinor Giffard knew well what such a decision meant, could anticipate what it would involve in the shape of personal discomfort, sacrifice, and even strife. Yet she was glad, because there was no sign of wavering in the eyes of her friend and comrade.

"What I do regret is that I married before the goal was reached. I pleaded with Mr. Campion to wait, but he would not. And now he must help to pay—we both must. As I pointed out to him this evening, it would be a monstrous thing to expect me to go back on all my comrades, to sacrifice the deepest convictions and aspirations of my soul simply because he wishes to enter Parliament! It is going to cost me something, Elinor, but I would not be worthy of the Cause if I were not prepared to pay the price. When I

look at your white face and see the indomitable spirit shining in your eyes, I realize what I must do."

At the moment a small, discreet knock came to the door, and Jessy Devine, demure, smiling, slightly deprecating, but quite firm, stepped in.

"Now, dears, I must forbid further talk. Joan, you haven't kept your word. I could almost be sure that my patient's temperature has risen two points. Out you go!"

With playful firmness she pointed Joan to the door.

She did not demur and, with a kiss and a murmured word, left the room.

Next morning the whole party, with the exception of the invalid, walked through the Park to the parish church of Walden, where the service was very high and the preaching good.

At the close of the service G. D. was laid hold of by the Canon's son, who was also at Rugby; and so it fell out that the others walked back in pairs to the house.

Campion went on ahead with Jessy, who was well pleased with the arrangement and felt that she was looking her best in her small, close-fitting bonnet with the big white strings, and her brown nurse's cloak which, blowing back with the wind, gave entrancing glimpses of her beautiful figure and trimly belted waist. Campion, however, had no eyes for these minor attractions, his mind and heart being entirely full of his own wife.

Giffard, who felt that he had a duty to perform to his friend and who was fully aware that he was expected to perform it in the next half-hour, was somewhat at a loss how to begin.

Joan helped him by asking how he had thought his sister was looking that morning.

"Nothing to boast about, Mrs. Campion. I'm afraid I was occupying myself during the sermon in wondering how I could get her spirited away from all these malign influences to a place where she could be restored to a normal frame of mind."

He used these unflattering words deliberately, and his companion received them in silence.

"I understand that it is difficult for you to grasp the situation, Mr. Giffard," she said at length. "But I should have thought by now the women would have convinced you of their sincerity."

"There is nothing to be sincere about," he answered quietly. "It is all a mistake—a blind devotion to something which does not exist at all."

Her face flushed, and, just for a second or more, hot words seemed to blister her tongue.

"I don't think honestly that it is any use for you and me to discuss the Suffrage, Mr. Giffard. It is a sublime Cause which is marching to certain victory whether men choose to be wilfully blind or not. There is nothing surer than that their awakening will come. Let us change the subject and remember only that we are hostess and guest

—also friends, I hope—on a very pretty road on a fine spring morning!"

The smile which accompanied these gracious, if slightly condescending, words was charming, but Giffard hardened himself against it.

"I shall be glad to bury the subject a little later, Mrs. Campion," he said, unconsciously adopting his most winning diplomatic manner. "Have I your permission to make one very intimate and personal remark, which perhaps even my long friendship with Dick will hardly justify in your eyes?"

"Why, yes, of course. There is nothing I am afraid of in the world, Mr. Giffard, except cruelty and wrong; and these I am prepared to fight to the uttermost."

Giffard suddenly stood still and prodded the ground with his walking-stick.

"Then, why in Heaven's name are you so abominably cruel to Dick?"

The question, altogether unpremeditated and unexpected, for a brief instant nonplussed Joan Campion.

"Dick has told you then what occurred last night! But naturally he would, and of course you would take his view. But will you tell me, Mr. Giffard, by what process of reasoning you prove to your own satisfaction that in a contract like matrimony the sacrifice should be all on one side?"

"I was not aware that you had made any particular sacrifice when you married Dick," said Giffard bluntly.

"You are wrong then; for I accepted the limitations which he set for me and which have hampered me so seriously in my work for the Cause that my colleagues now practically regard me as lost to them. But I have not grumbled, nor have I in the smallest degree drawn back from the pledge I gave him. He has broken his."

"But there are tremendous issues at stake. Dick says that this is the chance of a lifetime, and I can well see that it is."

"A chance for one man to obtain promotion—perhaps distinction—in certain directions on which he has set his heart. But there is no great principle involved—nothing which will benefit anybody except himself. Pitted against the Women's Cause, it can't be mentioned, Mr. Giffard," replied Joan, in her most judicial, reasoning voice, precisely as if she had been discussing some quite impersonal theme.

Giffard felt repelled, and both look and manner showed it.

"It is men who have lost entirely, if, indeed, they ever possessed it, the sense of proportion where women are concerned. What they have to learn and are learning through these terrible times is that men and women have equal rights and that they are going to be insisted on and established for all time."

Giffard shook his head.

"I agree with you that it is quite futile to discuss the subject further," he said rather stiffly, for now they were nearing the house and he caught Campion's rather anxious backward glance.

"Did Dick commission you to talk to me to-day?" she asked suddenly.

"*Commission* is hardly the word. It suggested itself to us both. I would do a great deal for him, Mrs. Campion, but I see that this I ought not to have undertaken."

"Oh, I don't mind that. I think it fine of you, and natural too. Men do stand up for one another! That is one fine thing we are not in the least ashamed of having learned from them. You think, then, that I fail in my duty, if I don't do this thing which Dick asks and expects of me?"

"Since you ask me, I do think so, absolutely."

Joan faintly smiled.

"Duty! Duty! Wonderful, elastic word! We might say of it, as of liberty, 'What crimes are committed in thy name!'"

A strained silence fell upon them then, and presently Joan abruptly changed the subject by directing his attention to a particularly beautiful vista through the trees, showing an ornamental lake in the distance with the soft April sunshine lying on it in a radiant flood.

In front, Jessy Devine, realizing that her immediate chance was slipping away, said a trifle

hurriedly, "Dick, I want to tell you how awfully sorry I am about last night. I'm very fond of Joan. She's my cousin and she's been good to me, but I think this is a shame—a horrible shame! Surely she won't persist. I want you to know that my sympathy is all with you. It has been all along, and I don't think I can stop here much longer, unless Joan plays a little fairer."

"Thank you, Jessy," said Campion, kindly enough but a trifle coldly. "I can't discuss Joan with you. But, please, whatever happens, we don't want you to leave Pennons. You are too valuable to all of us to have that happen."

And with that considerable admission Jessy was in the meantime content.

CHAPTER XIII

ENTER JULIA PRATT

AFTER lunch Giffard was invited by G. D. to come for a walk.

"Yes, surely," said Campion encouragingly. "Go, Giffie, if you think you can stand an hour of that youngster. At least, you won't be bored."

Campion was not himself. Giffard thought it ominous that, in the brief intervals when they had been alone together that day, he had not again referred to the subject of the deputation.

He much enjoyed his long ramble through the fields with G. D. That engaging youth was never at a loss. His tongue knew no weariness; and, long before they returned at tea-time, Giffard was in full possession of all the facts concerning the schoolboy's brief span of life. Also, he received an impressionist picture of life at Rugby, which interested him uncommonly and confirmed him in his belief in the great public school system, which, in spite of its known faults, offers the best possible preparation for the average life.

Giffard, so long cut off from all the healthy

concerns of English, and especially of schoolboy life, proved a most interested and sympathetic companion and listener; and, as they hove within sight of the low battlements of Pennons on their return, G. D. looked, with his winning glance of shy affection, into Giffard's grave face.

"Say, haven't we had a rippin' walk? It was jolly decent of you to come with me. I hope you're going to stop a bit. There are heaps of rippin' walks round here. And then, there's Lloyd George, you know, and the cart. You could have no end of a time!"

"I'm afraid I must go to-morrow," said Giffard, smiling down into the round, eager face. "I'll tell you what, though. You must come up and help me to do London. Would they let you come to Morley's for a few days? Then we could go to the Zoo and do the Exhibitions and anything else you fancy. It's a pity there are no pantomimes at Easter."

"Oh, we don't go much to pantomimes now. They're for the kids," said G. D. in high scorn. "I'll tell you what, though. I'd like to go to *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, if it's on. And there's somethin' rather rippin' runnin' somewhere just now called *The Schoolmaster*—Cyril Maude as a Head, don't you know. No end of sport!"

"All right, my boy. I'll fix it up with your mother and get seats for them all."

When they got home people had arrived for

tea—the Thurstons, among others—and Giffard looked round in vain for Mrs. Conrad.

The Squire had brought his wife and eldest daughter—a gentle, fair-haired girl some years out of her teens. To her Giffard voiced his disappointment at not seeing Mrs. Conrad.

"Granny!" smiled the girl. "Oh, isn't she a dear? She talked so much about you after she came home! We told her she had fallen in love with you. I hope you will go to see her in London. She has the dearest little house at Chelsea; and simply everybody goes to see her—Cabinet Ministers and actors and literary folk. It is the nearest approach to a Salon, they say, to be found in London. Her husband was an Irishman and a great politician."

"I shall certainly make a point of going," said Giffard warmly, looking with much approval at Anna Thurston's fair, restful face.

Although he did not know that the County had once fully expected an alliance between Dick Campion and Anna Thurston, he could not help thinking that, had Dick married such a woman, he would have done better for himself. He did not guess, either, how deeply and keenly the girl herself had been disappointed or how much it cost her to be sitting there and looking at Joan Campion dispensing the hospitality of the house.

For years Dick Campion had been like a son at Thurston Manor and had, in a manner, appropriated

Anna so that others, imagining there could be but one end to such a friendship, had kept away.

Then, quite suddenly, the bomb of his clandestine marriage had been dropped among them all, and it had required all the Thurston courage and fine feeling to behave as if nothing had happened.

Campion had no idea that his conduct in certain quarters had been characterized as that of a cad. He might have replied with truth that he had never made love to Anna Thurston, but certainly he had appropriated her and made her his confidante, but—married another woman!

It is so common a story that perhaps it need hardly be commented on. Had Joan known, she would have felt it keenly, for she was quick and jealous regarding the relations of the sexes and often instanced the unjust and unfair treatment girls received at the hands of men—treatment which they were powerless either to resent or put an end to.

"Father is so excited to-day, Mr. Giffard," whispered Anna Thurston when he brought her her tea, "by something he heard at church! As a matter of fact, it was Lord Francis Quenby. We walked to Quenby church this morning, and Lord Francis was reading the lessons. It is true—isn't it?—that Mr. Campion has accepted the offer of the constituency?"

"At least, he is considering it," said Giffard rather awkwardly.

"Oh, but surely it needs no consideration! It

is what he has been working and hoping for for years. Isn't Mrs. Campion most frightfully pleased about it ? "

Both of them looked in Joan's direction at the moment. She was answering some question being put to her by Mr. Thurston, and her expression seemed a little bewildered.

" She will be such a help to him too," said Anna Thurston a trifle wistfully. " I hear she speaks so splendidly ! "

All this was a sardonic comment on what had actually happened, and Giffard felt an increasing compassion for his friend and almost wished himself out of it all.

By much skilful parrying the subject of the coming contest was kept in abeyance, and it was not till after the Thurstons were in their carriage, driving home, that the Squire said there was something queer about it all and that Quenby had been too cock-sure about the issue.

Late that night a few more words passed in Campion's snuggery which, however, did not much enlighten Giffard.

" I suppose you are going back to London in the morning ? Eight-fifty is my train," said Campion, as he began to make himself a cigarette.

Giffard nodded, and they smoked a little in silence.

" Will you come down again, Giffie ? "

" Whenever you want me, old chap. I've

enjoyed myself A 1. And I do like G. D.—a ripping little pal, if ever there was one. You'll lend him to me for a week or so, won't you, Dick? "

"Oh, I don't mind, if you can be bothered with him. He is a good little chap—very loyal and most absurdly and unnecessarily grateful. You can settle it with his mother."

Silence again, broken by Campion's rather sombre voice.

"I don't think there's a ghost of a chance of Joan's giving in, Giffie. She as good as told me so this afternoon, while you were out with G. D. That was what made it so beastly awkward when old Thurston came over bursting with it. But she's clever! By George, she is! She managed to put them off the scent without committing herself. I was grateful to her for that."

"Then you're not going to insist—ahem!—on her obedience?" said Giffard slowly.

Campion sat back and laughed. But it was not a cheery nor a pleasant sound.

"Obedience! We've dropped the word out of our vocabulary! Most certainly it's a dead letter in the marriage service."

"So your legitimate ambition is baulked," observed Giffard. "Jolly hard lines! But it isn't any use talking about it that I can see. We don't get any forrarder."

Campion grumbled a good deal more; and finally when Giffard suggested that they should turn

in, he remarked, "I'll go and see Lord Francis to-morrow. I'll get down early for the purpose. I'll make a clean breast of everything to him and take whatever advice he offers. He's a good old sort—a statesman of the old school—and modern methods sicken him. But he'll be kind to me. He told me when I came into Pennons that my mother was the only woman he had ever loved."

Campion's voice dropped to a curious softness.

"She married my father, of course; but his disappointment didn't sour him. He's one of the most understanding men I've ever met, and I believe he'll understand even Joan's point of view."

"Has he met her?" inquired Giffard interestedly.

"No; but his daughter called. Joan didn't care for her. She's rather terrible in her way, and not in the least like her father."

"Well, it would give me uncommon satisfaction to hear that you had found some way out of this mess," said Giffard slowly. "I think it is very good of you to give my sister harbourage in the circumstances, for she's even keener than Mrs. Campion and undoubtedly will take her side in this crisis."

Campion smiled his sunny smile.

"That's a horse of another colour. Pennons has always been an open house, and, I hope, always will be."

They travelled to town together next morning

after Giffard had parted courteously, but a little coldly, from his hostess.

"You have seen Elinor this morning?" she said at breakfast. "She is much better, and I think we shall let her up for a little while this afternoon."

"I haven't seen her," Giffard answered. "I am glad she is better."

And he went without seeing her, which angered Joan and somewhat cooled her favourable impression of him.

Giffard, however, was not in the mood to care. The only person from whom he parted with genuine regret was G. D., who had wormed himself into his very heart.

Giffard had a quite definite desire to see Louie Desmond again and to discuss with her the situation at Pennons. There seemed no particular reason why he should not indulge himself in his desire, though a wiser, more prudent man might have paused to ask whither this road might lead.

After attending to his correspondence at the hotel, he telephoned to the flat—only to be informed that Miss Desmond was not at home.

"She lef' word that she was at 'Eadquarters, if anybody particular wanted 'er," came the porter's friendly voice over the wire.

Giffard thanked him, and, after a brief consultation with himself, decided to go there, partly with the object of seeing Miss Desmond and partly to satisfy a certain curiosity of his own regarding all

that pertained to this strange Movement which had so much in its power.

The premises, where the campaign of dispeace and militarism was conceived and organized, were quite unpretentious. But Giffard, to his own inward amusement, was not admitted without a rather severe questioning.

"You may take my word for it. I'm neither a spy nor a private detective," he assured the spectacled, severe-looking person who interviewed him in the outer passage. "I am a friend of Miss Desmond and should be glad to have a word with her, if she is here and willing to see me. If not, there is no harm done."

Louie, who, in the inner room heard the brief altercation, came out, full of laughing excuses. She had her hat off and her coat flung back, and her face was piquante and attractive as ever.

"How awfully good of you to call like this——and how brave!" she said, with a little *moue*. "The authorities are even more severe on our male supporters than they are on us, and anything might happen to you here."

She was only making fun, and Giffard smiled back indulgently.

"I'll take the risks. I think they would have some difficulty in bringing a suffragist charge against me at Bow Street."

"Ah, you don't know how clever they are at trumping up charges," she assured him. "Well,

I suppose you have come up from Pennons this morning to tell me about Elinor. How is she?"

"Recovering, Mrs. Campion says. I saw her yesterday."

"And not to-day?"

"No. I didn't feel that I wanted to," he answered, and Louie's little face grew grave.

"Oh, but you mustn't be vindictive! After all, she hasn't hurt you."

"Oh, hasn't she? But that's just what she has done," said Giffard, his eyes roving round the bare, business-like office. "I suppose this is where the bombs are made. Aren't they afraid to leave you in sole possession? How does it come about?"

"I am not in sole possession, I assure you. Miss Martindale, who has just put you through your paces, is capable of sustaining a siege, single-handed. I'm only waiting for some of them to turn up. I make myself useful where I can—doing a bit of clerical work or helping with the accounts. Didn't you enjoy Pennons this time? I've heard it is a lovely place."

"It is. But it isn't possible to enjoy anything with this canker everywhere," he replied, and then told her what had happened at Pennons.

She was most intensely interested, her eyes positively growing round with excitement.

"It's a horrible situation, isn't it? And she has refused, has she? It was game of her!"

"Game?" repeated Giffard loftily. "I call it something very different."

"Oh, you would, of course. You're a man, and Campion's friend. It's the only attitude possible to you. How do you think it will end?"

Giffard shook his head.

"Impossible to tell. I rather fancy that somewhere at the back of his mind poor Campion is cherishing a forlorn hope that perhaps she'll think better of it. But what I say, Miss Desmond, is that a good chap like Campion should not be put in such a beastly awkward fix. It isn't playing the game."

"It all depends on the conditions they made or exchanged before they married," observed Louie shrewdly. "Yes, Miss Martindale?"

"A young woman asking for Mrs. Campion—won't go away until she has seen someone. Will *you* see her?"

"Oh, yes. Show her in. You needn't go, Mr. Giffard. It will be a matter of no importance, I assure you. We have all sorts of queer people calling here, and perhaps it may help you to understand."

Giffard smiled in acquiescence; and presently through the open door came a young woman whose face was oddly familiar to him. He had certainly the feeling of having seen her before.

She was dressed in a somewhat badly-fitting coat and skirt and a hat trimmed with spring flowers,

the crude pink of which jarred against the reddish colour of her hair.

"Good-morning," said Louie, in a cool, alert, business-like tone which rather surprised Giffard. "You wished to see Mrs. Campion?"

"You are not her?" said the girl, in quick incredulity.

"No. Mrs. Campion is out of town. But perhaps I can hear your business, unless it is of a private nature."

"It is—and it isn't. Are you one of the bosses here?"

"At least I am authorized to see people," said Louie coolly. "May I ask your name?"

"No objections to give it, I'm sure. My name is Julia Pratt, and I live at Paragon Terrace, Finsbury Park."

Instantly Giffard remembered his evening run in the Tube on the occasion when he dined with the Maitlands; and the memory of the conversation which he had overheard between Miss Pratt and her casual admirer returned freshly.

"This is the Headquarters of the Suffragettes, isn't it?" inquired Miss Pratt. "I called to say I'm thinking of joining, if it's any good."

"I don't quite understand why you should have come here, Miss Pratt," said Louie clearly. "Haven't you a local secretary in your district? She was the person to consult."

"I don't know her," observed Miss Pratt coolly;

" and, anyways, it is always best to go to the top. I'd like a job."

" Tell me about yourself," suggested Miss Desmond, leaning her elbows on her desk and looking straight into Julia's face. " You may speak in front of this gentleman," she added, observing Julia's gaze wandering in Giffard's direction.

" There ain't much to tell. I'm out of a job. Got the chuck from the place where I worked—Jones and Mullinses at 'Ammersmith. I dare say you know them. I didn't ought to have got the chuck. It was through the shopwalker; a horrid, low-down cad he was! It's all of a piece with the way women are treated in business by men. Our Miss Francis says Votes for Women is going to change all that. You must know Miss Francis, Miss, if you are one of the bosses. She knows you well."

" I know Miss Margaret Francis well," said Louie more interestedly.

" It was her told me there was jobs goin' here. Can you give me one? I am strong and not frightened at anything. And I would like to get even with some of the men. If Votes for Wimmin is goin' to do it, I'm on."

Louie laughed rather gently.

" I don't know that we have any jobs such as you are thinking of. There are paid workers in our organization of course—as there are in every other; but I'm afraid you've had no training or experience that would be worth money to us."

" I've a big, strong arm, and I ain't afraid of policemen. It ain't likely! I know too much about them. My grandfather was one."

" I am unable to do anything for you to-day," said Louie decidedly. " I advise you to seek out your local secretary, or go and have another talk with Miss Francis. She didn't advise you to come here, I am sure."

" No. I did it on me own and because a pal of mine told me a gal could earn three quid a week at this business."

" I'll take your name and address," said Louie, as Julia disappointedly rose.

And when that was accomplished she walked with her to the door.

" Is it any good? I mean, is there a livin' to be made at it—honour bright? " inquired Julia with engaging frankness ere she took her departure.

Miss Desmond shook her head.

" If that is all you are out for, my dear, you'd better apply elsewhere," she answered, and closed the door.

" The raw material! " she said lightly, as she turned her bright face to Giffard. " It shows what extraordinary ideas are abroad about the Suffrage, doesn't it? "

" I was struck by one thing, however," said Giffard almost unwillingly, as if it cost him something to make the admission.

" What? " asked Louie interestedly.

" She has evidently got the idea that Suffrage stands for championship of women."

" Why, of course," answered Louie, with her gay smile. " Every street *gamin* could tell you that. The meaning and intention are good, but we've gone off the rails somehow and have become home-wreckers. Oh, I wish I knew what was going to happen at Pennons ! "

CHAPTER XIV

THE BIT PLACE

THERE were many branches of the Howorth family in and around Crayham, and, in order to distinguish them, they were usually called by their Christian names, with Mr. or Mrs. prefixed.

Thus there were Mrs. James Howorth at Ashleydene, Mrs. Andrew at Whitehouses, Mrs. Adam at Besley Grange, and Mrs. William at what was familiarly known as the House by the Works.

Mrs. James was the widow of a Manchester surgeon who had come back to the place of her birth. Mrs. Andrew's husband was a retired shipbuilder from Barrow. Crayham was the cradle of the Howorths as a family, and the House by the Works their original home.

It had been built three generations back by old Adam Howorth, grandfather of the present head of the firm, who had likewise founded the business and risen from the ranks of labour to be a large employer. They were a sturdy, virile race, possessing all the qualities which help to make the north a substantial part of the nation's backbone.

Fortunes had been made and, so far, none lost in Crayham, for they allied both business acumen and economy in their natures and methods. Of course there had been more than one alien bird in that highly respectable and orthodox nest; but never had there been anything in the nature of a scandal connected with the name of Howorth, which had been synonymous with uprightness, piety and good works.

For these reasons and also because of the just and equitable relations existing between master and man Crayham had been singularly free from the labour unrest which torments most industrial communities.

The Howorths, being the leading people, set the pace; and it would not have paid any lesser lights to initiate changes.

Crayham was a typical industrial town, scattered on both sides of the deep, swift-flowing Cray, which cheerfully turned so many mill wheels, and so brought wealth to the town.

The William Howorths, as they were called, lived in the House by the Works, Adam having succeeded his father in Besley Grange, which had been purchased from a needy aristocrat who had made ducks and drakes of a once princely heritage.

Adam's wife, before her marriage the principal of a ladies' college—a clever, capable, high-cultured woman—had been cordially received by the county until she had thrown in her lot with the militant branch of the suffragists.

Of this obsession, Mrs. William—a plain, cheerful, common-sense Scotchwoman, eminently middle-class and home-keeping in every sense of the word—disapproved with all her might. She spoke of the Grange children as "poor lambs" and openly commiserated Adam, at the same time taking care to point out to her own ewe lamb the frightful risk in present-day matrimony for the average man.

Though she had but two children of her own—John and a daughter Evelyn, happily married to a rich Halifax spinner—Mrs. William believed in large families, holding that they were the only means of anchoring men and of keeping women out of mischief. Her talk was as refreshing as the wind which swept down from the moors in cool, crisp weather and blew the smoke away from the clustering roofs of Crayham. A woman of the old school, sane, well-balanced, devoid of silly pride, a trifle old-fashioned judged by present standards, Mrs. William was deeply respected in Crayham and indeed far beyond its limits. Her kindness of heart was colossal, and her tongue was only feared by evil-doers or fools.

Her son John was devoted to her, and they lived together in perfect amity.

In spite of its proximity to the great hive of industry that had laid the foundations of the Howorth fortunes, the House by the Works was a most desirable abode. It was large and roomy and straggling, having been added to from time to

time, and was surrounded by a quite considerable garden, in which Mrs. William took unlimited pride. It was furnished with good substantial stuff warranted to stand tear and wear. Solid comfort, abundant, well-cooked food, and a kind of homeliness and freedom gave a particular charm, often lacking in more pretentious abodes.

To the House by the Works, then, came Edward Giffard on a certain evening early in May, and was met at the station by Howorth, who was driving his powerful, two-seater car guaranteed to negotiate a hill at lightning speed.

On his native heath, as it were, Howorth presented a singularly winning and fine figure. He wore a suit composed of the worsted tweed for which his firm was famous, a cap of the same on his curly hair, and a smile of genuine and cheerful welcome on his good-looking face.

When Giffard beheld him he was suddenly conscious of much satisfaction at having got clean away from London and all its myriad claims.

He had now been six weeks in England, and his circle had widened considerably since the day when, a forlorn straggler in London streets, he had been tempted to regret his home-coming.

Mortlake and his set had taken Giffard up. An eligible bachelor, shortly to be honoured by the King, and with presumably a distinguished career in front of him, Giffard was speedily surprised at the number and quality of the invitations which

began to shower upon him. Not averse to society and anxious to obtain as much insight as possible into the social conditions in England before he should again quit her shores, he became for the nonce quite a society man.

He enjoyed the functions after a fashion, tempered by the sting of his own personal loneliness. It is a poor life for a man, by nature home-loving and home-keeping, to return to solitary bed and board at a public hostelry, with no companion but his own thoughts.

During the intervening weeks he had seen very little of his sister, who was taking her part in the grotesque comedy—the Cat and Mouse Act.

Howorth's smile of genial welcome immediately communicated its warmth to Giffard, and they shook hands with an odd fervency.

"So you've come at last. I was beginning to despair and threatened my mother that I would go and carry you off by bodily force. I think you look tired. Too much London season—eh?"

"I've had my share," answered Giffard, as he followed his friend through the booking-office to the waiting car, which he eyed with much favour.

"Napier," said Howorth briefly. "Little ripper! —British make, every bolt and screw of her! When it's good it's hard to beat."

It was only half a mile to the House by the Works, and presently Giffard was being received at the door by a large, ample person wearing a

voluminous black silk frock, a broad lace collar, and a white cap, which sat becomingly on her abundant hair and made the clear-skinned, smooth face look astonishingly young.

She was sufficiently like her son to make their kinship apparent, but her colouring was darker.

"How do you do, Mr. Giffard?" she said, and the soft roll of her tongue betrayed her north country origin. "I'm glad to see you. This lad of mine has been talking nothing but your name since he was in London last."

Giffard smiled, took the hand she offered, and bent and kissed it with a courtly grace. Why he did so he could not tell. Perhaps he was suddenly impressed with the fact that he was in the presence of the highest and best type of womanhood, embodying the motherhood of the nation.

She, on her part, looking into his thin, somewhat worn brown face, decided that he needed mothering, and took him to her motherly heart forthwith.

It was then about six o'clock, and Giffard found that early hours were kept in the House by the Works, seven being the dinner hour.

He came down at the sound of the loud, clanging, old-fashioned bell, and found his hostess waiting for him at the dining-room door, wearing the same gown, her smile, if anything, a trifle more kind.

"Come away in. We have not a fire in the drawing-room the night, for my son, he hates drawing-rooms as his father did before him. The

world's work is not done in drawing-rooms—eh, my man?"

"And that's a very true word. I've been too much in them of late," he answered, as he followed her into the big, comfortable, substantial family room where a round table was spread rather massively as to silver, though slenderly equipped with flowers.

"We have another room at the back—a sort of library and morning room," she explained. "Then I have a bit place of my own up the stair. Maybe, when you have been here a day or two, you'll find your way there for a crack."

Giffard smiled and said he would.

A little later "the bit place" became to him a haven, where he could seek—and never in vain—sympathy, loving-kindness, mothering such as he had been a stranger to for many years.

Howorth, whistling, came running down the stairs two steps at a time, and the meal began. Mrs. Howorth did not talk very much on that occasion. She beamed on the two young men and became more and more enamoured of her son's new friend, of whom she had heard so much.

It was a very pleasant hour; but, immediately it was over, a summons came for Howorth from without, and, much against his will, he had to sally forth to the Works.

"That's the worst of living on the spot," he said

ruefully. "Now, old Adam, out at Besley, escapes all this sort of thing."

Giffard asked whether he might come, but Howorth dissuaded him.

"It's something to do with boilers—a new one, which is giving trouble. Better stop with my mother. I promise you a comprehensive tour to-morrow. This is a grubby business in overalls and wouldn't interest you in the least."

Howorth departed forthwith, and Giffard was without further ado introduced to "the bit place," where his hostess directed the coffee to be brought.

It was a wonderfully pleasant room, large and low and wide, beautifully furnished with homely, comfortable chairs and couches, covered in big-patterned chintz to match the window hangings, water colours on the walls and an astonishing number of books, for a lady's boudoir, one end being shelved from ceiling to floor.

"I'm a great reader," remarked Mrs. Howorth, observing Giffard's glance resting on the books. "You see I have a heap of spare time. Now, where will you sit? This is Johnnie's chair. Him and me are great chums. And you may smoke and welcome. Johnnie does, and so did his father before him in this room. And the woman who nips her men-folk about their smoke is a fool."

Giffard threw himself into Johnnie's chair and prepared to enjoy the next half-hour.

Presently the coffee-tray was brought and set on a small table in front of Mrs. Howorth, and she inquired his taste and was very careful to meet it in every particular.

"I don't wonder that Johnnie, as you call him, has never married," observed Giffard, after he had taken one sip of the fragrant beverage. "I am sure it's the coffee that anchors him. You don't taste this once in a blue moon."

The old lady laughed, much pleased, and sat back comfortably.

"I'm not saying I'm sorry that Johnnie had to go to the boiler, for he would have taken possession of you all the evening. You have been a terrible long time away in foreign parts, I hear."

Giffard smiled a trifle grimly.

"I don't know that the years in foreign parts were as terrible as the weeks I've been at home."

"Ah, you have felt it dull and lonely, living about hotels very likely. Johnnie has told me a little about your sister. I wanted to write and ask her to come with you, but he said she wouldn't come."

"She might," said Giffard, touched by the thought. "I saw her yesterday, looking very tired and thin. I understand that you have the Suffrage down here too, in this very place—even in your own immediate family circle."

"Ay," answered Mrs. Howorth curtly—"Adam's wife."

Giffard lit his cigarette and smoked for a few moments in silence. He could quite well gather from the expression of Mrs. Howorth's face that all manner of thoughts were chasing themselves through her mind and struggling for expression.

"It's an awful thing—this that has taken hold of the women, Mr. Giffard," she said at length. "It's working endless ill. Here, in Crayham, since my nephew's wife came to Besley she has spread the thing. She's very clever, and her tongue is a very wile of the deil! She has done ill in every sense, making discontent among the workers and breakin' up the peace of her own and other homes. The queer thing is that when ye see her, ye cannot be angry wi' her, for she has a way wi' her that would carry anything before it."

"That is one of the most serious aspects of the whole business, Mrs. Howorth. It is the very best type of women who seem to become imbued with this strange poison."

The old lady sat forward suddenly, her keen eyes alert and shining.

"It's too much education that has done it, Mr. Giffard—too much and too little. It began with the scarcity of servant lasses after the Board Schools got a proper hold. They got all too big for their boots. They all wanted to be ladies, and nobody wanted to work. Nowadays it has gone a step further, and everybody wants to be somebody—making a noise in the world and commanding

attention, if not by good works, then by breaking windows and fighting policemen. They are all fruits of one tree. I'm old-fashioned and simple, maybe, but I'm sure I'm right in this—that there is no happiness, nor ever will be, for a country where its women are not content to bide quietly at home."

"One of their favourite arguments is that there is no demand for them at home—that there are not sufficient homes to go round," observed Giffard.

Mrs. Howorth made a gesture of extreme contempt.

"That will not hold water, and never has. The country is famishing for good servants, and folks are willing to give them all sorts of unheard-of liberties besides the highest wages. But every woman is a lady now, and none will soil her hands. It's all this ill-digested education. Maybe after another century has gone by, when some real knowledge will have filtered through experience, it may show some benefit. But in the meantime we suffer. Tell me, Mr. Giffard, what made your sister first join the wild women?"

Giffard shook his head.

"I can't tell you. We have never threshed the thing out. We are both too sore about it. Besides I've seen very little of her since I came home—a few hours all told. She has spent a good part of it in Holloway."

"Dear, dear, it's astonishing what they can bring themselves to! Take Adam's wife, now. There never was a better mother, yet she would leave her little bairn ailing because she said the Cause was calling her! It seems as if everything must go down before it."

After a moment she resumed:

"It's all a part of this terrible self-will that is everywhere, from highest to lowest, and oldest to youngest. Everybody wants to be free and to be a law to themselves. Even the bit mill lassies—God help them!—are full of it. It is only them that has lived and suffered and know life who could tell them that there is no such thing as freedom in the world—no, nor ever will be. The Lord who went before us said it was to be the way of the Cross."

Giffard listened as one might listen to a seer.

"Mrs. Howorth, the world needs women like you to go out and proclaim the faith that is in you for the salvation of the rest of us."

She shook her head.

"No me! I have a mother's meeting, and that is all the speaking I am able for. It's doing and not speaking we need, Mr. Giffard. But about your sister? She has no mother, poor lassie; and something bids me try to mother her. Do you think she would come down here, supposing I were to write and ask her?"

"I can't tell, for no one can predict with any

certainty what she will or will not do. But it is like your kind heart to think of such a thing."

"Oh, that's nothing. I think it fair terrible that you should have seen so little of each other; and this might be your chance. You are biding over the Sunday?"

"I have thought of it, if you can put me up for so long."

"Put you up? What for no? The house does not look big, but it has four spare bedrooms. We'll put you up just as long as you like to stop and be blithe to do it. Let me see—this is Wednesday. If I write and send it out to-night, she'll get it the morn and could be here on Friday night."

Giffard tried to thank her, but she waved him silent.

"That's nothing—only, we must keep Adam's wife and her separate. You must get a chance of seeing her before then, for I assure you both she and her bairns are worth seeing. To-morrow's Thursday, isn't it?"

"Yes, and I think of going over to Newark to-morrow afternoon to see the old home."

"Johnnie will run you over in Wee Macgregor, won't he?"

"He is going to York to-morrow, I think by train, and we propose to travel part of the way together."

"All right. Have it as you like. I dare say we can arrange something else. You'll see Adam at

the Mill to-morrow morning. I'll get my note for your sister written and send one of them out with it."

Giffard wondered what was in that letter, but he did not ask to see it, nor did she offer to let him read it.

He had very little expectation that the invitation would be accepted, but he was wrong.

Late next afternoon a wire came from Elinor, accepting and giving particulars of her train.

CHAPTER XV

A LIFE FOR A LIFE

IT was Giffard's first visit to an industrial community, and it interested him profoundly.

Next morning before breakfast he walked round by the Mill, and was standing in the green square before the offices when the great whistles flew from a hundred eager throats, and work was suspended as if by magic. Almost immediately the torrent of humanity began to flow from every portion of the great hive, all converging on the gates.

He was amazed at the magnitude of the crowds, and specially interested in the feminine portion of it.

The Howorths employed hundreds of women and girls, and their wages bill would have made Giffard stare.

It was not so much the economic value of the labour which interested him, however, as the appeal of femininity. How did that section of the wage-earning community of women regard the New Movement, which had avowedly for its object the uplift of their sex?

As he watched the chattering throng throwing chaff and badinage about as they hurried pell-mell from the precincts, the question interested him profoundly. They were but a section—a comparatively small section—and, given a common motive, complete organization, and competent leadership, what might the new force not accomplish?

He had already heard to repletion of the demands of labour, of the harassed relations between master and man, of the precarious conditions under which every great contract was signed and undertaken. And again the odd Van Winklish feeling crept over him, and he thought with a faint longing of the comparative freedom of Lotali.

His thoughts were partly expressed on his face, when Howorth, in his old working jacket, seized him from behind.

"Hulloa, old chap, whence that dismal look? They're all right, I can assure you. Shall I collect them at the dinner-hour and let you harangue them? I promise you that they'll answer up sharp that there's no oppression or sweating here."

"I wasn't thinking of that," answered Giffard, smiling, "but of what the next few years might do for them, if events march as they have been doing of late."

"Oh, it'll fizzle out—it's bound to! I saw from the *Post* this morning that one of them has died in a nursing home—Polly Carey. She belonged to

these parts—no, not Crayham. She was an employee at Boulter's Mills at Bradford. It was Mrs. Adam, however, who first led her off the line. I wonder how she feels this morning! I haven't seen old Adam yet. I'm the working boss, you know. Adam comes down in his motor after breakfast."

Giffard was intensely interested in the item of news, and hastened to read for himself in the *Yorkshire Post*, which gave it in large type, because the victim of her own fanatic zeal was a native of the county.

The difference in powers of endurance had been proved and accentuated among the hunger-strikers, and in nearly every instance the gently-born and more delicately nurtured had proved themselves the stronger.

No doubt the careful nursing and feeding of early days were the prime factors in this difference. Polly Carey, as she was familiarly called, had been a love-child for whom no one was particularly responsible. Her early years had been spent among grudging relatives, and at the earliest possible age she had become a half-timer in a mill where child labour was employed.

It was not at Crayham, however, for the Howorths were to the fore in every reform, and there had been no case of child labour in their employ for many years.

Polly Carey's early experience had been excep-

tionally full of hardship. She had tasted hunger, weariness, sickness of heart long before the days of the voluntary hunger-strike; and, when Diana Howorth made her first militant speech from a cart, drawn up at the edge of Crayham Moor, Polly Carey had been the earliest and most eager convert to the new Crusade which was to emancipate women from all the disabilities, injustices, and hardships of their lot.

Polly Carey—without education or training or experience, with nothing but her own native wit, her deep heartburning sense of wrong and injustice which had pursued her, inarticulate, through all her stunted life—became a priceless asset to the Cause. She had nothing to lose, no relative for whose opinion or prejudice she cared a fig, and her red-hot enthusiasm knew no bounds. Very soon she developed speaking gifts, which never failed to move and convict.

She was by nature, experience, and habit of thoughts antagonistic to men. The full story of her wrongs, dating from her helpless little girlhood, cannot be told here—it never has been told. But it gave to her tongue a pointed edge, while her fearlessness was absolute, her courage sublime. As for death—for her it had no terrors. She had been heard to say that death was women's kindest friend, and that those who died in infancy were specially beloved of the gods.

Her death was a terrific blow to the Cause. At

the breakfast-table at the House by the Works they talked of it casually, and Mrs. Howorth seemed concerned as to its effect on Diana.

"I've heard her say that, if they killed Polly Carey, it would be like Cranmer's death—a candle that would never be extinguished in England till the victory is won."

About half-past ten, in the offices across from the great gates, Giffard was introduced to the head of the firm.

He was a large, plain, silent man, though, when his slow smile lit his face, it was a wonderfully pleasant one.

An excellent understanding existed between the cousins. They worked most amicably together, and had no secrets from each other. Adam was therefore in possession of the facts of Giffard's life, so far as they were known to his cousin John.

"Your first visit to Yorkshire, Mr. Giffard?" he inquired as they shook hands.

"Hardly," answered Giffard, with a smile. "I was born in the Rectory at Newark."

"Indeed! I don't think you mentioned that, Jack?"

"I didn't know it till he came," answered Johnnie.

"Well, we think our Crayham district holds its own for beauty. My wife sends you a message. Will you dine with us this evening at half-past seven? You and your mother can come, I hope, Jack?"

"I think so. Giffard and I are going to York; but I don't expect we shall be later than six o'clock of getting back."

The arrangement was made, and shortly thereafter the younger Howorth and Giffard left to get their train.

They parted at York to meet again by arrangement later in the day. Howorth gathered from Giffard's rather sad face then that he had found that old haunts revisited offered as much pain as pleasure.

"It's a mistake, I'm sure, old chap; but I didn't like to say so this morning," he said sympathetically. "It's best to let the dead past bury its dead."

"The old name is green in Newark yet, my mother's especially," said Giffard, wooed by the kind tone to a certain confidence. "She lived in the same parish for twenty-nine years without making a single enemy or losing a single friend—a great record, Howorth! I was sorry my sister was not with me. Perhaps I ought to have waited."

"Perhaps you could go another day. I could tool you both over in the car. It isn't so very far when one knows the short cuts."

When they reached home they were met by Mrs. Howorth, triumphantly waving Elinor's telegram.

"She'll be here the morn's afternoon at four-thirty! So, you see, I was not so far wrong, Mr. Giffard."

"I don't think I committed myself," laughed

Giffard back. "If I remember rightly, I think I said nobody could calculate to an absolute certainty what she would do."

"Well, I'm pleased anyway, and I'm to do my best to convert her to my way of thinking before I let her away. Johnnie there will tell you that I am terrible set on my own way and that I nearly always get it."

Her kindly grey-blue eyes twinkled, and she followed her son to his dressing-room, and sat on the front of his bed to put the studs in his evening shirt with her deft fingers.

"Johnnie, we must keep her away from Diana. First of all, we'll not tell her the night that Miss Giffard is coming, and the morn——"

"Oh, but, mother, it's no use! How can we keep them apart?"

"Oh, it can be done. Anything can be done if a body lays their mind to it. I've got a ploy. We'll get Adam to take Mr. Giffard in tow the morn, and you can take Miss Giffard over to Newark in Wee Macgregor yourself."

A rather odd expression flitted across Johnnie's face.

"You're an arch-plotter, mother! The Suffragettes lost a grand recruit in you," was all he said.

"I could get even wi' them yet, if I laid my mind to it; and I've set my heart on savin' this lassie."

"Whom you have never seen, mother! What will you do next?"

"It's for her brother's sake first, and then for her own. He's a sad man, and this thing has taken possession of him. I would like to make her see the error of her ways and her duty to her brother. But we must keep her out of Diana's clutches, for I haven't a chance beside her."

"You are not reckoning with Miss Giffard herself, mother, for of course she must know Diana intimately, as they are in the same camp. It's more than probable that was why she was so eager to accept your invitation—because she knew she would have a chance of seeing Diana."

"I'll risk it," said his mother firmly. "Pouf! but that last buttonhole was a tickler! They shouldn't starch neck-bands; but it's useless telling them. Everybody does everything nowadays just as they think fit, and will take advice from nobody!"

So the discussion ended with a laugh. In all her eagerness and single-hearted desire to do kindness to her guest, Mrs. Howorth had no idea that she was putting any danger in her son's way, or that very far-reaching issues were to arise out of her simple act of motherly kindness.

Giffard was surprised at the stately grandeur of Besley Grange, which far surpassed any of the country homes of England he had yet seen. He realized, as he had not yet done, the power and magnitude of the industrial wealth of the country, and, though his eyes were keenly critical, he could

not detect a single flaw or incongruity in the establishment.

Driven up the long avenue of stately beeches in Mrs. Howorth's own carriage and pair (she had not yet been induced to sample Wee Macgregor) they were ushered into an enormous, panelled hall, the carving of which was known to connoisseurs all the world over.

The master of the house, sitting by the blazing fire of logs—even summer evenings are cool in the north—rose to receive them with marked affection and cordiality.

"Perhaps you can find your way upstairs, Aunt Margaret. Diana isn't down yet."

"I'll just leave my cloak here. Ah, here she is," answered Mrs. Howorth, smiling and nodding towards the head of the great, wide, shallow staircase of sheer black oak, which was a feature of the house.

Giffard with a quickened interest followed the glance and saw, to his amazement, a very small figure—smaller even than Louie Desmond's and as exquisitely neat.

A gown of dead black chiffon, wholly unrelieved, showed off the marvellous whiteness of her skin, and her small head was coiled high with masses of very fair hair. Her face was an arresting one, for, though almost cameo-like in features, there were strength and dignity and power there. The eyeglass slightly veiled, but did not altogether disguise,

the clear, straight glance of her eyes, which were particularly keen as they dwelt on Giffard's face after she had affectionately greeted Mrs. Howorth.

"I am pleased to see you. I think I have the pleasure of knowing your sister."

"I believe so. She is coming to Crayham to-morrow, thanks to kind Mrs. Howorth."

So, man-like, Giffard gave away the whole situation in an instant, sublimely unconscious of old Mrs. Howorth's grimaces behind him!

Diana Howorth's face was very grave. Throughout dinner she had scarcely a smile, though she was very courteous to Giffard and displayed an intimate knowledge—which surprised him—of the place where the last decade of his life had been spent.

She knew more about Lotali, its internal affairs and the way in which he had administered them, than some of those whose business it ought to have been to know them; and Giffard naturally responded with the utmost keenness and readiness to her intelligent and interesting questions.

During the last six weeks a large part of his conversational powers had been utilized in giving elementary information regarding Lotali. Its geographical situation was generally the starting-point.

Mrs. Howorth, senior, smiled cheerfully at the other end of the table as she saw Diana taking over their guest.

The name of Polly Carey was not mentioned; but one felt, somehow, that there was a shadow on the heart of the hostess, and her preoccupied air proclaimed that her thoughts occasionally roamed far enough from her present surroundings.

Giffard was delighted with his entertainment. The beauty and dignity of the old house; the perfection of the meal and its accompaniments, the total absence of any jarring note both pleased and surprised him.

It was indeed difficult to realize that the dignified châtelaine of such a home had been out with the advance wing of the Militant Army, had been through innumerable and undignified scrimmages, such as Giffard had read of but had not yet seen, and, above all, that she had suffered the personal degradation of the gaol.

So small a party necessitated conversation being pretty general, but coffee was served in the hall and the men came out to smoke there.

Then Mrs. Adam Howorth came and sat by Giffard's side once more, apparently desirous to talk of more intimate matters.

"I have not seen Elinor for a good many weeks. I have a delicate baby, and I have had to stay down here. But my heart is in the thick of the fight she is so nobly taking her part in. Do you not think it quite splendid what has been accomplished? You ought to be proud that you're Elinor's brother."

She spoke with perfect seriousness, which left

Giffard in no doubt but that she meant every word she uttered.

"Proud?—I'm afraid I can't say I am. In fact—there is no use sailing under false pretences, Mrs. Howorth—I am ashamed of the part my sister is playing. Had she enrolled herself among the law-abiding section of the new party, I might have understood, though my sympathy would never have been very active. But I am opposed with every fibre of my being to the militant methods. I arrived home to have the opportunity of paying my sister's heavy fine and getting her out of gaol—a little service for which she did not even thank me."

"Of course not," murmured Mrs. Adam promptly —"none of us would. I've had to submit to that too; but, in my case, there was an excuse, for a married woman is not a free agent in the same sense. She has her duty to her children."

Giffard glanced at Adam Howorth's sombre face and wondered whether he was at all times left out of the count.

"I am surprised that you, who have done so much pioneer work, should be so prejudiced, so wilfully and blatantly hostile," she went on. "Can't you see what all this means? It is for the regeneration of the world, the uplift of everything that matters. It will mean, in the end, a new race."

"Utopia—of which man has dreamed since

the beginning of time, but which he has never yet attained ! " said Giffard briefly.

" Of course, if all took that dismal view, nothing would be done. You have heard, I suppose, of our sister who died in London last night a victim of this effete and wicked Government. Her body has died, but her spirit will live for ever. The torch she has lit will never be put out. We are proud, proud that she belonged to us right here ! There are hundreds of women and little children, overdriven in the labour centres, who will have an easier time in the days to come because Mary Carey has lived and died."

When Giffard made no response, she smiled faintly into his face, a smile wet with tears.

" All men are not hostile to us. Even here in Crayham, we have many in full sympathy with us. Has Johnnie or my husband mentioned Reuben Shapley's name to you ? "

Giffard replied that he had never heard it.

" He's foreman in one of the departments in our Mill, and he is engaged to Mary Carey. But they took a common vow that they would wait for their own personal happiness till women had the vote. I had not the courage to do that, but it is what I ought to have done. If there is no other way of making men understand—then we should withhold what they most desire."

A strange commentary on these words was made on Saturday afternoon when Giffard and his sister,

returning in the car with John Howorth from a long excursion to their shooting-place in the very heart of the moors, came quite suddenly about five o'clock in the afternoon to a crowd collected on the edge of the Moor at its nearest point to the town.

It was a favourite site for meetings of an open-air kind, and such were frequent, especially on a Saturday afternoon when the mill hands had a half-holiday.

The football season had closed, and only the more enthusiastic cricketers were in the playing fields, which accounted for the large number of men in the crowd.

"Hulloa, what's this!" said Howorth cheerily, as he began to slow down on the long, white ribbon of the moorland road.

He was just about to say "Suffragettes; I could bet my bottom dollar!" but a glance at Elinor's sweet face restrained him.

She had been twenty-four hours in the house now, and the word had not been so much as mentioned, even by his mother. It looked as if Elinor had come down, determined to atone to her brother for her neglect and indifference, and that she therefore exerted all her efforts to please. When she liked, Elinor could be both a charming and a womanly woman. In fact, observing an expression in Johnnie's eyes at breakfast that morning, his mother had begun to question the wisdom of the thing she had done.

"There's a woman standing on a platform," said Elinor, her eyes beginning to glow.

"I see her," answered Howorth grimly. "It's Adam's wife."

They were obliged to crawl, because the crowd was surging on to the roadway, where it was being kept in order by a couple of policemen, good-natured, perfectly tolerant, but on the alert to check the smallest disturbance.

Elinor's eyes were fixed on the familiar banner of the Union, tied with a huge bow of crape. Most of the men were bare-headed and seemed to be listening with respectful sympathy to what Mrs. Adam Howorth was saying.

"Oh, do stop, Mr. Howorth," pleaded Elinor, in her eagerness even laying her hand on the steering wheel.

He had no alternative, for the crowd was quite dense on the road and made no move to make way for the car.

"I feel sure I will not appeal in vain to you, men and women of Crayham, who loved Mary Carey, to raise a monument to her dear memory. You know, I am sure; but, lest there should be any in doubt, I will tell you," rang out the clear, bell-like voice, while Diana Howorth's face shone like that of one inspired. "The best monument—in fact, the only one she would desire—is devotion and fealty to the Cause for which she laid down her life. I want you—a great company of her

fellow-workers, the men and women she loved —to take a vow that you will not rest until the Cause which martyred her is for ever and irrevocably won."

She paused there and put up her small white hand, as if she saw something coming and would prevent it reaching its mark.

But she failed.

Those in the waiting car beheld with horror a large stone, well-aimed, high above the crowd, whirl through the air and hit her on the right temple.

She fell without a sound, and, though caught by a dozen pairs of hands, many thought she was dead.

At the outside edge of the crowd, from whence the missile had come, there seemed to be some confusion of ideas. But those nearest to the haggard, dark-haired, wild-eyed young man who had done the deed heard him call out in tones of indescribable hatred and vindictiveness. "It was you led her away first—my Polly! She wur a' reet till you put that damned stuff inter 'er! Take that!"

When the crowd closed upon him and the police led him away, Reuben Shapley looked round dazedly.

"A life for a life—it's what the Book says. 'E can't do nuthin' to me. The Book says it, 'A Life for a Life'!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE AFTERMATH

IN an instant the occupants of the car alighted and a way was made for them.

Poor Diana was lying motionless on the greensward just below the platform, her face deathly white save for the long bruise on the right temple. Elinor knelt down and laid her hand to her heart, but at the moment a woman in nurse's uniform pushed her way through.

"Can I be of any use? I'm the Matron of the Cottage Hospital. Shall we take her there, Mr. Howorth?"

She knelt down as she spoke, and in a moment assured them she was still alive.

"Probably she has concussion from the blow," she said, in her cool, business-like tones. "Mr. Howorth, we are quite near. Please, let us get her in the car and down to the Hospital without delay."

They acted on her advice immediately and with a sense of relief, for Besley Grange was four miles away and delay involved by the journey home

might be fatal. Very smoothly and quietly John Howorth drove his car down the hill to the Hospital gates, Giffard and his sister following on foot.

It was a ghastly walk. For the whole half mile neither uttered a word.

Arrived at the gates of the Cottage Hospital, they met John Howorth coming out. He appeared much shaken and abstained, Elinor thought, from looking at her.

"They are quite hopeful. The Matron was quite right. It is concussion of the brain she has got. They think she will recover. Will you get in, please, and I'll drive you home; then I'll have to go and tell poor old Adam."

"Don't trouble about us," said Giffard quickly. "We can walk home."

"Besley's on the other side, and it won't take me out of my way an inch to drop you at home."

So they got in without a word and on the way were sickened to have to pass the two policemen with Reuben Shapley handcuffed between them. He was walking along steadily with his head in the air, but his face had a vacant expression and his eyes a wandering stare, which seemed to indicate that, for the time being, at least, his reason was unhinged.

Giffard's face was very grimly set by the time they reached the House by the Works, where Mrs. Howorth was waiting tea for them, full of eager inquiries as to the pleasure of their day.

Howorth did not come farther than the gates, and the Giffards therefore had the unpleasant task of breaking the news of the outrage to the old lady. It was Elinor who did it, Giffard indicating by a glance that he declined the task.

"There has been a horrid accident, Mrs. Howorth," began Elinor rather hurriedly. "There was a meeting on the Moor, and Mrs. Adam Howorth was speaking from a platform as we came by. Just then somebody threw a stone and hit her."

"Killed her, I suppose you mean?" said the old lady, in a voice of curious calm.

"No, no! She is still alive, and they have hope at the Hospital to which Mr. Howorth took her in the car. He has gone now to Besley to tell her husband."

Mrs. Howorth was trembling very much as she sank into a chair.

"Did they get the miscreant that threw the stone? Nobody in Crayham could have been so wicked, no matter what she said; for she has been an angel to them there—just spoiling them, as I have often told her. It must have been some ootlin'. No Crayham man or woman would have done it."

Elinor ran suddenly and swiftly up the stair. She had faced many hostile demonstrations in the last three years and much rough handling, but, somehow, her heart quailed before Margaret Howorth's eyes.

Nobody sought to detain her; and, before she

was out of hearing, Mrs. Howorth eagerly questioned Giffard.

"Can ye tell me nothing more, Mr. Giffard?"

"I heard them say it was a man of the name of Shapley. I remember it, because Mrs. Howorth happened to mention it the other night at Besley. I understand he was the lover of this poor woman who has died in London."

"Reuben Shapley to throw a stone at his master's wife! Oh, Mr. Giffard, this shows you what is being done by all this unholy agitation. Diana Howorth struck down by a Shapley, whose folk have been about the Mill since ever it was a mill! Wae's me!"

She wrung her hands and appeared so acutely distressed that Giffard had to muster all his resources to comfort her.

"One can understand that he acted on an uncontrollable impulse, being, we must imagine, distraught with grief. Indeed, he had the look of one who did not know what he was doing."

"Oh, I understand well enough, my man! But just think! If it hadn't been for this Suffragette crew, Reuben Shapley and Polly Carey would have been happy man and wife down there in their little house by the river, with bonnie bairns about them! And now she is dead, and he, poor lad, will doubtless be gaoled for attempted murder or something of that kind! But they can never charge or try him! He must be got off. It'll be

Adam's duty to get him off. Even if Diana should die, it would be but a life for a life."

Elinor on the stairs heard these words and shivered.

"Come down and get some tea, lass," cried Mrs. Howorth, recalled to her hospitable duties by the sight of her guest's white face. "You look as white as a sheet."

She stretched out a friendly hand and drew Elinor down on the sofa beside her, for she was far too wise and just a woman to shower wholesale blame.

"Make out the tea, will ye, my dear? Your eyes are better and your hand surer than mine. What did they say about Diana?"

"Concussion of the brain, the house surgeon said. But they were getting someone else to see her when Mr. Howorth left. We passed his car going through the town."

"Well, I sincerely pray she may get better for her own sake and her man's and her little bairns', and maybe it will cure her. But we must take up Reuben Shapley's case. I mind him a little chap carrying his father's dinner from the far side of the Moor. They had to live up there on account of his mother's health. She was a jimpy body and aye dwined in the town. Eat something, my dear, and drink up your tea. I'm not blaming you, though maybe this will be a lesson to you too and show you what mischief is actually bein' wrought."

It was with relief that, afar off, Giffard heard the particular hoot of Wee Macgregor's horn, and, excusing himself hastily, he went off to the stable-yard to receive his host.

Then Mrs. Howorth turned very deliberately to Elinor, and, fixing her clear, keen old eyes on her changing face, spoke out what was in her mind.

"My dear, you are a kindly, clever, sensible lass. Tell me, how have you brought yourself to this fight against law and order and all that makes for happiness and peace?"

Elinor had often been required to give chapter and verse for the faith that was in her, and seldom had she been at a loss. But now she was wholly so, for she perceived that Mrs. Howorth's point of view was as clear and definite as her own.

"Come," said Margaret Howorth firmly, "I'm waitin' for my answer."

"I don't suppose I have one that will satisfy you," said Elinor in rather a low voice. "Perhaps the best I can give is in Savonarola's words, 'Every change is bought by sacrifice.'"

"Ay, they are fine-sounding words. But whose is the sacrifice?" asked the old lady rather shrilly. "Mostly, if not always, that of the innocent. I tell you, my dear, the Almighty does not, and cannot, approve of this wicked destruction. It is opposed to all the teaching of His word."

"The word that is unfair to women all through!" cried Elinor, stung by both tone and words.

Mrs. Howorth regarded her mournfully.

"Ye were brought up in a minister's house, I understand, but ye have let the faith of your fathers slip away from you."

"I never knew precisely what my father's faith was," Elinor replied ruthlessly. "He had a reputation as a preacher, and people came long distances to hear him. But the thing he preached had nothing to do with his life. He was often unkind and even cruel to my mother, who was one of the meek ones of the earth. I know now that she was wrong in being so meek and that she ought to have stood up against the injustice and limitations of her life. We were poor, but all through his life my father lacked for nothing—fine food, good wine, the best of everything he had! And my mother went without! I can remember when I was quite a little thing I used to be so angry with my father I could have killed him. I used to shake my fist at him in the dark."

"But your mother, I could take my vow, lived and died more happily than you, my dear, are likely to do! And your brother told me when he came back from Newark on Thursday that everywhere her name is revered—as yours will never be, if you go on as you are doing."

"I don't mind about that, if I can do some good while I am alive," said Elinor hotly; and at the moment Howorth and Giffard entered together.

Then Mrs. Howorth turned eagerly to her son

to question him regarding his visit to Besley and the manner in which Adam had received the distracting news.

A cloud was, of course, cast on the visit, and Sunday was rather a dreary day. Inquiry at the Hospital early in the morning elicited the information that Mrs. Adam Howorth was still unconscious, but that the surgeons were more hopeful.

Immediately after lunch Mrs. Howorth drove out to Besley, accompanied by Giffard, and John asked Elinor to walk with him over Copley Common, which lay in the opposite direction from Crayham Moor and was hardly less beautiful.

So far, Elinor had not heard Howorth express any opinion regarding the burning question of the hour, and she felt a little curious to know exactly where he stood. She liked him; she had done so from the first moment of their meeting.

But he did not evince the slightest desire to embark on the theme. He told her a great deal about the neighbourhood and its interests. She listened sympathetically. Then, when he described all that his mother did for the comfort and well-being of the girl-workers at Crayham Mills, Elinor got her chance.

"I am sure that here, in this particular area, there are no grievances or wrongs of women requiring redress, but Crayham may be the exception that proves the rule. Mrs. Adam Howorth has demonstrated that she does not believe it is

sufficient to be happy and free from blame oneself. She felt her responsibility to those who are helpless."

Howorth did not speak for a moment.

"I suppose you share your mother's anti-views?" said Elinor then, looking at his kind, strong face a little wistfully.

"Not to the same extent. She is very old-fashioned. I think that women-householders and women-employers should certainly have the vote as well as men of the same class," he answered gravely.

"But you think that they are not fitted for the full franchise—not so fitted, for instance, as that man who, yesterday, threw the stone at Mrs. Howorth?"

John Howorth's face hardened. She could not have been less happy in her simile.

"You don't know anything about Reuben Shapley. He is a most intelligent and well-read man, far ahead of his times. He was not himself yesterday. His grief had unhinged his brain. The possibility is that he may not recover. My contention is that any Cause which has such an aftermath has something the matter at the base. Had Polly Carey been content to work with the moderates on constitutional lines, she would have been alive to-day and that ghastly tragedy would not have happened. Supposing for a moment that my cousin's wife should not recover—which

Heaven forbid!—the man will either be hanged or get penal servitude for life, which would be the practical destruction of three lives. No Cause built on such a foundation can expect to prosper or make good. I wonder that a woman like you cannot see that."

She was silent, but unconvinced.

"Since I became a Militant Suffragist I have learned so much, have seen so much of the dark places of the earth which are full of the habitations of cruelty to women!" she cried passionately. "I could not go back or be silent. I must go on, even if it is to death. I am sorry it was not I who died yesterday, instead of Mary Carey. I would not be missed; her loss is irreparable!"

Howorth thought of Giffard and his lonely estate and marvelled that a woman of instincts so fine should not see what appeared to him her obvious duty.

"Your brother feels all this acutely."

She shook her head a trifle impatiently.

"His pride is hurt—his pride of family and class, that is all. And he has all the prejudices of his training and experience. I find it impossible even to discuss things with him."

"At least, don't deny him a heart that can feel," said Howorth a trifle banteringly. "I think it was his genuine affection for you which suffered the worst pang that ghastly day when he arrived in London and found himself without kith or kin."

Her face changed a little.

"I was sorry, of course, and I was prepared to do what I could. But he would have no half-measures. He wanted me to give up everything! That has been the way with men from time immemorial."

"I suppose so; and the little they have to give in exchange counts for nothing," said Howorth a trifle whimsically. "I suppose—I suppose *you* will never marry?"

Her face flushed and she turned quickly away, for she had not been prepared for such a question, and something stirred in her heart which disquieted her extremely.

"It does not enter meanwhile," was all she said. "Hadn't we better be getting back now?"

They enjoyed the stroll back together, and the bone of contention was not again referred to.

But it was not possible in the somewhat exceptional circumstances to escape long from it. Arrived at the House by the Works, they found that Adam had come back with them and that they had visited the Hospital before coming in for tea. The report was unaltered. They still waited for some sign of returning consciousness in Diana.

Elinor was conscious of both apprehension and deep interest at meeting Diana Howorth's husband for the first time, and she was rather surprised that he should seem quite anxious to speak to her. He

brought his tea-cup in his hand and sat down beside her in a remote corner of "the bit place," where tea was served.

"I have heard my wife speak of you frequently," he said in his slow, somewhat ponderous fashion, which made him such a contrast to his merry-eyed cousin.

"Yes?" said Elinor with a slight tremor in her voice. "We all have the very highest respect and reverence for Mrs. Howorth. She is one of the best. Need I say—need I say——?"

Here her voice, in spite of herself, broke, but Howorth merely nodded.

"I quite understand. Those who go out to the fight take the risks of war, Miss Giffard. I only wish to say that I am entirely in sympathy with my wife on this subject, and that what she has done was done with my full knowledge and consent. We have never disagreed on it, even when it was necessary for me sometimes to tell her to come home."

Elinor looked the supreme surprise she felt.

Somehow, she had obtained the impression that among her husband's people Diana Howorth stood alone.

"You surprise me very much, but of course I am glad," she murmured quickly.

"I thought I should like you to understand," he said gravely. "I am not a talking man, but I am in full sympathy with the Movement, and I

believe that, when victory comes, it will be entirely due to the efforts of the Militants."

"Oh!" said Elinor with a little gasp and a glance in the direction of the others. "Do they know that these are your opinions?"

"I believe so. But that is a matter of no importance. My wife knew them. She will be spared to me, I don't doubt, Miss Giffard; and, in any case, there will be no prosecution of Reuben Shapley, if I can possibly prevent it."

It was a long time before Elinor recovered from the surprise of that brief conversation, which she recounted to her brother on their journey back to London next day.

"So, you see, Ted, there are some men—men as good and as intelligent as you—who are one with us," she added with a triumphant note in her voice.

Giffard merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Poor beggar! I'm inclined to class him with Reuben Shapley and say his griefs have unhinged his brain. Hulloa, here's something very interesting," he broke off suddenly as he unfolded the summary of *The Times*. "The writ is out for the Eastern Division of Essex, and so Campion will soon be in the thick of the fight. I must look him up to-day and hear all his news."

"Mrs. Campion won't take any part in the campaign," said Elinor with a little tightness of the lips which almost savoured of vindictiveness.

"I rather think she must have given in on the major point, otherwise why this announcement? I was present when the committee laid down their ultimatum, and there was no dubiety about it. Have they discussed it, do you know, at your —ahem!—Headquarters?"

When Giffard adopted that tone it invariably annoyed his sister. His slightly sarcastic tone was generally accentuated by his resemblance to their father—a combination which Elinor, of long and faithful memory, did not relish.

"If we had, I shouldn't be likely to divulge it," was all she said.

"I suppose not, and I don't wonder at it. There isn't much in these deliberations to be proud of. I would uncommonly like to hear how they justify themselves, where poor Shapley is concerned. He ought not to have been put in gaol for what he did. They've robbed him, probably, of more than they know."

There was something prophetic in Giffard's words, for, though they were spared the deeper tragedy at Crayham, and Diana Howorth, in a few weeks' time, was out and about again, Reuben Shapley, when he walked a free man again, was a broken one, who would never be able to take his full place in the world of men.

By that time the grass was growing green above Polly Carey's grave.

CHAPTER XVII

TOO LATE

JOAN CAMPION, from among the letters filling her morning post-bag, at her flat in Victoria Street, picked out one addressed in G. D.'s big, sprawling, unformed handwriting and bearing the Rugby post-mark.

G. D. did not write many letters, and received fewer, perhaps, than most of his compeers. A letter from him to his mother was an event, and generally contained something controversial or in the nature of a demand.

Joan was in a pensive mood. She had been alone at the flat for eleven days without once going down to Pennons, and she had not seen Dick. She had awakened that morning with the full consciousness that she could not continue her present mode of existence any longer.

That pregnant week-end at Pennons had ended, if not in a complete rupture, at least in a coolness between her and her husband. Dick Campion, one of the most good-natured of men, had an obstinate vein in him, and, once roused, was not so

easily placated as men who are more casual and frequent in their tempers.

Joan had disappointed and, in a manner, insulted him—such was his argument. She had cheapened him in his own county, among those for whose opinion he cared mightily. His pride was up in arms. He had indicated to her that until she would apologize and atone they must go their separate ways.

Joan, smarting under a mistaken sense of honour, had resented this and plainly said that the fault was wholly his, that he had failed to keep the pledge given before marriage. She had left Pennons to the care of Jessy Devine and had not even sent or received a telephone message. Campion was in town every day, not more than a mile away, and the telephone was at hand, but they had not communicated once.

The rupture, then, was pretty complete, and had been for eleven days.

Now, eleven days is not a very long space of time, judged from some standpoints, but it is long enough to contain a good deal of active pain for two hearts that love one another.

Joan knew that hers was intolerably sore; she hoped that Dick's was sore likewise. But she intended to find out.

She awoke, determined to make an end of a situation which her common-sense informed her was both ridiculous and impossible. She had not been idle in these eleven days—far from it. Never

had she worked more strenuously or more feverishly. The death of Polly Carey had quickened them in every direction. There had been meetings, processions, frustrated deputations to the House, drastic doings in the militant camp into which she had thrown herself with at least a semblance of her pristine courage and self-forgetfulness. In the evening papers she had read, in common with other interested persons, that her husband was the approved candidate for the Division, and that his electioneering campaign was to begin forthwith. It was to be a three-cornered contest, and she knew why. The Militants were going to support a Labour candidate for the sole purpose of defeating the Liberal elect.

So, without any desire or effort on her part, her Party would play into Campion's hands. She took no joy in the thought. That morning all things seemed flat, stale, and unprofitable to Joan Campion, and she anticipated a meeting of Committee at eleven o'clock without enthusiasm.

Pushing aside her voluminous correspondence with careless fingers, she opened G. D.'s envelope and proceeded to make herself mistress of the contents.

"DEAR MATER," it began,

"I haven't heard from you for ages, but I had a letter from Jess last night, which has given me the pip. She says you haven't been at

Pennons for nearly a fortnight, and that the Pater has got the blues. She says, too, that he's going through all this election without you, and is counting on her to help. Say, Mater, don't let that happen. It's rotten, you know. Besides, it won't do. Jess is all right as far as she goes, but you can't expect the Pater to like her doing the things you ought to do.

"Oh, Mater, do chuck all this bally rot, and go down and stand by him! You ought to, don't you know, because he's so jolly decent to us all. I feel a worm when I think of it, and I'd like to get down and wipe his boots. He's a perfect stunner, Mater, and everybody seems to know it except you.

"I can't help it if you are angry with me. I simply must get this off my chest. If you don't do it now, how am I ever to face him at the long hols., which the Paradines are expecting to spend at Pennons? Oh, Mater, do!

"I'm most awf'ly hipped about it—even off my grub, and I don't know whether to write to him or not. He gave me a fiver when I left Pennons. I promised him not to tell, and I wouldn't, only I want to rub it in. I hope you won't think I have a beastly cheek, but I simply had to.

"Love from G. D."

The letter ended with the usual hieroglyphic flourishes which every Mater is supposed to understand!

Joan's mouth quivered a little as she pored over the badly written sheet. G. D. perhaps was no great scholar, but his heart was in the right place, and his love and loyalty to the man who had taught him the meaning of fatherhood in these few brief months was a beautiful thing.

Her fingers were almost caressing as she put the crumpled sheet back in its covering, and locked it away. It was the spur she needed, as well as her confirmation in a good resolve. She would excuse herself from the meeting at which she had promised to appear that evening, and, if possible, join Dick at Liverpool Street for the usual train.

Her intention was good, but the fates were not propitious, and her day was full of worries and cross-happenings.

When she got down to the offices of the Union at eleven o'clock she found that only Elinor Giffard was waiting.

"I've been at Crayham for the week-end," she said, after the usual greetings had passed. "I suppose you know what happened on Saturday?"

"To Diana Howorth, you mean?—yes, of course. All the papers are full of it. Were you stopping at Besley?"

"No. At the cousin's house at Crayham Mills. But I saw the thing happen, Mrs. Campion."

"It was a pity. But she isn't fatally injured, I hope?" said Joan, her face full of lively concern.

"They say not, but she wasn't conscious when we left this morning."

"What ailed the man? Was he mad, or merely violent?"

"Don't the newspapers say? Why, he was Reuben Shapley—the man Mary Carey was engaged to!"

Joan looked incredulous.

"I think there must be a mistake. Shapley was friendly to us; I have seen him at the Kingsway, and he has often helped Mary at her country meetings."

"I assure you there is no mistake. Mr. Adam Howorth thinks he has gone out of his mind with grief."

Joan Campion looked very grave. She did not like such happenings. Nobody could deplore them more, and in her private soul she regarded Polly Carey's death as a misfortune as well as a deplorable mistake. It had shocked her inexpressibly.

"When is the funeral to take place?" asked Elinor in a low voice.

"On Wednesday. It will be a great sight, but —but somehow, I wish it were over. I told them yesterday over the telephone that I believed a public funeral in the circumstances would be a mistake. After the funeral, I believe, there are more things going to happen, you know——"

Her look was significant, and Elinor nodded understandingly. The campaign of wanton de-

struction was proceeding merrily, and serving its purpose in implanting terror and dismay in every direction. Beyond doubt these tactics were paralysing members of the Government, who seemed at times wholly at a loss.

"What took you to Crayham if Diana did not invite you?" asked Mrs. Campion presently. "I always understood that she was the only suffragist among the Howorths. And were they very maddened about poor Diana?"

Elinor nodded.

"It ought never to have happened, but it was particularly unfortunate that it should have happened at that particular moment. It destroyed the last chance of getting my brother on our side."

"He's a very fine man, Elinor, and I wish—I wish——"

She broke off suddenly and dropped her eyes on the half-finished letter on the desk before her.

Elinor did not demand the utterance of that wish. It is possible that she divined it unuttered.

"It was a pity he came home just when he did. I believe victory is in sight," said Joan Campion bravely. "The Pankhursts think so too. Christabel said so in her last letter."

Elinor looked interested, but hardly enthusiastic. She had a private opinion regarding the French refugee which she had never voiced, even to those most intimately concerned.

"Florence Attwood saw her in Paris last week,"

went on Joan. "She is looking splendid, and Flo was particularly taken up with the cut of her frock, I could observe! Now, of course, she is most frightfully anxious about her mother. We don't want any more deaths, Elinor. They don't pay—looked at from any point of view. They merely outrage the public and make them callous—to say nothing of the private grief which can never be assuaged."

Quite suddenly she broke off at a fresh tangent.

"I think of going down to Pennons to-night. I haven't been there for nearly a fortnight."

Elinor looked surprised.

"But why, when it is so near, and there has not been more than usual going on?"

"Can't you guess? Mr. Campion thinks I have failed in my duty, while I know that he has broken the pledge he gave me before we married, not to interfere seriously with my work. Fact is, Elinor, women like us have no right to the ties other women play with. You are among the wise virgins, and I counsel you to remain so."

She wondered at the sudden reddening in Elinor's cheeks, and, sharp as a needle, immediately drew her own conclusions. The Crayham visit had puzzled her, and now she imagined a clue.

"I shall never marry," said Elinor firmly. "But though you refused to satisfy the bigots of East Essex, it has not prevented Mr. Campion's nomination."

"Lord Francis Quenby did something—I don't

quite know what—to pacify and reassure them. And he wrote me the most charming letter. He is an old dear, Elinor, and I was very sorry not to be as charming in return. But I did my best, and I suppose that Dick got his nomination in spite of the other thing. Men are such babies, Elinor. Any woman not quite a fool and who knows how to exploit herself can wind any one of them round her little finger."

Elinor's lip curled ever so slightly.

"Not all men, I think. I can't imagine any woman winding my brother Ted or moving him a hair's-breadth out of his way. A woman would merely be an episode in his life, and I rather think I should pity her. But I don't think he will ever marry——"

"He is the kind of man who does the big things," Joan reminded her. "But I think you are hardly just to your brother. He has a very soft side. He showed it so much at Pennons—notably to my rather wearing young son. It was really rather fine to see them together. No man gets round a boy's heart so completely unless he has a very soft side somewhere, for boys, even the most cubbish of them, are more sentimental than the most mawkish schoolgirl ever dreamed of being, only they hide it, that's the difference."

The mention of G. D. brought before Joan's vision the picture drawn in his letter, and she rose rather hastily.

"Surely they are all late this morning again," she said, with a touch of irritation in her voice. "Say, Elinor, Louie Desmond is going back on us, and rapidly——"

"I don't think so. Only she doesn't want to give her career up entirely. She can't afford to."

Joan shrugged her shoulders.

"You mark my words, Elinor. In less than six months Louie will have married or else abjured us. Anyhow, she won't be in at the finish. Are you going to speak to-night? They'll want to hear your version of the Crayham affair, the true version. The papers are exaggerating it with their usual unfairness and mendacity."

"There is only one thing worth while that I could tell them," said Elinor, with a little glow both in her voice and looks.

"What's that?"

"That Adam Howorth is entirely with us, even yet, and though his wife is lying dangerously ill, he says that the victory, when it comes, will be entirely owing to the Militants."

"Did he say that? How fine! He must be an exceptional man. I am quite sure that if anybody had thrown a stone at me, my husband would have wreaked a personal vengeance on the thrower, and shut me up for good."

"Yet nobody would dare to say that Diana's husband doesn't care for her," observed Elinor,

with a certain hard significance. "It shows a higher point of view, that's all."

Both tone and words embodied all the single woman's criticism of the marriage state which she is seldom chary of offering on occasion.

Joan was a good-tempered, tolerant woman, however, and merely smiled. The point did not seem to her worth arguing, though having had two husbands she might have claimed some of the wisdom of experience.

Presently the arrival of their colleagues put an end to the more personal talk, and the concerns of the day and forthcoming days immediately absorbed them. Mrs. Campion had to take a colleague's place at an evening meeting in a distant suburb, and she was thus prevented meeting her husband as she had mentally planned, and going down with him on the usual train.

The meeting was hostile, and they were absolutely refused a hearing, and after a good deal of hustling and horse-play, the police cleared the hall. When Joan escaped into the back room of a small newsmonger's shop, she discovered from her watch-bracelet that it was only half-past eight and that it would be possible for her, if she could find a convenient taxicab, to catch the nine o'clock train at Ilford, which was its only stop before Walden. It was not necessary for her to return to the flat for any of her personal belongings, for she only kept what she described as her "fighting kit" in Victoria Street.

She just managed to get the train, and as she sank down rather exhausted both mentally and physically, for the last hour had been undoubtedly strenuous, she was conscious of a sudden and violent distaste and disgust of it all. These moments of depression, sometimes of revolt, are well-known to all reformers. None of them, even the most strenuous and enthusiastic, would dare deny that they are sometimes asking themselves whether, vulgarly speaking, the game is worth the candle.

For about five minutes after the nine o'clock express left Ilford Station that night Joan was quite sure it was not. She flung her dispatch-case, which contained the talking woman's usual notes and equipment, into the farthest corner of the empty compartment, and with a huge sigh sank into her seat. She was tired, and sick of being hustled. Presently she rose slightly and surveyed herself in the little square of looking-glass let into the panel above the opposite seat. Her hat was awry, her hair ruffled, her general appearance the reverse of dignified. Afraid of losing the train which she had felt a sudden and irresistible desire to catch, she had not given a thought to her appearance, and now she did not like it.

She pulled off her gloves hurriedly, and, removing her hat, proceeded to remedy the defects in her toilet. By the time she was quite satisfied with the result the train was slowing down for Walden.

Three minutes later she was out on what was practically a deserted platform.

The solitary porter, who knew as much as the rest of Walden regarding affairs at Pennons, and whose imagination supplied all that lacked, hastened forward with a rather queer expression on his face.

"The motor ain't there, ma'am, leastways, not that I've seen or 'eard. Theer's nothin' in the yard, but Simmins' fly."

"Call him over to the door, then. He has to take me to Pennons," she answered, with a touch of dignity, even of resentment. The man's manner and an ignominious passage in Simmins' dilapidated fly were all of a piece with the experiences of the evening. Joan suddenly realized that she was a very human woman, not in the least uplifted above the ordinary weaknesses of her sex, that she loved ease, dignity, the deference of inferiors, the comfort of an assured position, and something in that small, grimy porter's expression particularly maddened her.

The fly covered the distance to Pennons in record time, and it was only a quarter to ten by the time they turned in at the gates, which the driver had to get down and open, grumbling to himself, all the lights being decorously out in the lodge windows.

"You need only go to the head of the drive," Joan instructed him, and he stopped accordingly at sufficient distance from the drawbridge to ensure that no sound of wheels could reach the house.

Joan gave him half a crown, bade him good-night, and walked across to the house.

She was not surprised to find her entrance barred by the nail-studded door. Early hours were kept at Pennons, even when the family were in full residence. She did not dream of ringing, but walked leisurely round to the back of the house, where she intended to surprise Dick in the library and effect her entrance, as she had often done before, by the French window which opened on the terrace behind. The moat was only intact at the front of the house. After the time of war and war's alarms was finally over, a peace-loving lord of Pennons had filled in the moat at the south side, and made a beautiful terrace with a stone balustrade on which the peacocks sunned themselves.

It was a night of wonderful moonlight, and never had Pennons looked more fair.

Its old-time charm, some spell from out the past, stole over the woman who was mistress of it, and her heart softened strangely.

After all, there was something fine and powerful too in old tradition, old chivalry, in all the rich heritage of a family that had been cradled there. She seemed to understand in a sudden flash all their natural and inherited distaste and scorn of the strange new upheavals which threatened to sweep their traditions away, and break all their idols in the dust.

In this oddly chastened mood, she felt prepared even to meet her husband half-way.

She would admit that he had his rights, and in the long intimate talk, the very anticipation of which thrilled her, they would arrive at some sane and permanent understanding regarding the dividing line. She stole softly and quietly to the long window across which the heavy tapestry curtains were only partially drawn, while the window itself stood ajar, to admit the soft pure night air.

She pictured Dick in the depths of his easy chair, his feet probably on another, his pipe in his mouth, deep in the evening paper or poring over some law book. How his face would brighten at the unexpected vision which would presently meet his eyes!

But it was her vision which changed, for the picture on which it rested was so incredible, so unexpected, in its way so appalling, that for a moment she almost lost consciousness.

In his chair, just as she had pictured, sat Dick, but he was not alone. A woman was by his side, kneeling on the floor, with her face hidden on the arm of the chair, and the sound of her low sobbing was in the room.

It was Jessy Devine's figure, and Dick's hand rested on her bent head tenderly, while his face wore a look which Joan wholly misconstrued.

She drew back with an involuntary shudder, which they might almost have heard, and sped backward into the night.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MASK OFF

JOAN walked away quickly, desperate to escape. But presently she halted on a rustic bridge spanning the stream, which had once been diverted into the moat, but was now restored to its pristine use, that of keeping green and lovely the lower part of the Pennons park and woods.

It was a deep swift-flowing stream which even in long torrid summers never failed, splendid trout and grayling lurked in the deep pools, providing one of the known delights of his new home to G. D. His mother remembered him sharply, as her foot trod the mossy stones of the bridge, for she had lingered there with him through one long delightful April evening and watched him fill his basket. G. D. had warned her too late.

She sat down on the parapet, and watched the moonbeams play on the swift-flowing water, and asked herself one dismal unanswerable question. Were all men alike? Were honour, fealty, love, dead letters in their souls? Were they ready, to

a man, to betray whatever woman-soul was fool enough to trust them?

She had been so sure! During these incomparable months of the first real happiness she had ever tasted, her heart had grown strong and free and glad, like a bird on the wing, because of that very surety. And lo, it had no existence! Given the hour and the woman, Dick Campion, whom she had set on a pedestal for her womanly worship, was no better than the rest! Even Guy Delorme, with his practised infidelities, his unblushing friendships with women, was less culpable, for he had pretended nothing, had never posed as good, or faithful, or anything a husband should be. He had taken his license always, and never troubled to inquire concerning hers. With Delorme, at least, she had known exactly where she was, and what to expect. Two great slow tears, wrung from a heart almost at the breaking point, welled suddenly in her dry burning eyes, and rolled unchecked down her cheeks. In that moment of supreme anguish, of complete and awful disillusionment, Joan Campion expiated part of her own folly, as well as any neglect of her home which might have been laid at her door.

In the house of Guy Delorme, during the seven years she had been his wife, she had suffered many wounds to her pride, to her self-esteem, but it is only where love is that such poignancy can be felt.

She was not conscious of anger, but only of a great,

ineffable sadness. She had dreamed a dream and it was over, that was all!

She had cherished a hope, for which there never was, nor ever could be, any real foundation.

Her house of life, as aforetime, was built upon the sand!

What must she do now? was presently the question in front of her. Out of the chaos of her awful suffering there came presently some quiet and ordered thought. She would make no scene. She never had. Even in the years of her degradation in the house of the other man, she had simply endured; she could endure again, but it would be with a difference.

She would go quite quietly into the house, and let them know what she had seen. She did not wish any explanation, but only to let them know.

Then Jessy must go. At the thought of the woman whom she had consistently stood by and befriended for so long, even in opposition to an odd personal shrinking from her, she involuntarily rose, and began to move back towards the house. But this time, she avoided the library window and, making a détour, came round to the front door, where she pulled the long wrought-iron handle of the bell, which immediately sent a sombre clang through the house. After a brief interval, there was the undoing of bolts within and an astonished manservant threw open the nail-studded door.

" Oh, Ma'am, is it you ? Beg pardon, I'm sure ! " he said, all in a flutter.

" There is no occasion to beg my pardon, Truefitt. I am very late. I came up on the station fly. They have not all gone to bed, I suppose ? "

" Oh, no, Ma'am, some tea has just been taken into the library for Master and Miss Devine."

" All right, I'll go there, and you may bring another cup and some sandwiches. I haven't dined."

The man took her dispatch-case, helped her off with her cloak, with his usual respectful readiness, but his face wore a distinctly puzzled look. When his mistress swept past him and took the long corridor to the library door he went away in the opposite direction, shaking his head.

Joan did not pause or hesitate at the library door. She dared not, but when she threw it open, and coughed on the threshold, her quick eye was infinitely relieved to discern her husband there alone.

When he heard her, he looked round in complete surprise, and rose hastily to his feet.

" Why, my dear ! " he stammered, as if not quite certain how to address her. " Wherever have you come from, and what a colour you have ! How did you get from the station ? "

" Simmins' fly," she answered, thankful for the moment that he did not offer to kiss her. " Where's Jessy ? Truefitt told me tea had gone in for you both."

"She's gone to bed," he answered, and oh, how quick she was to note that he turned away at the moment. "Simmins' fly! But in the name of wonder why didn't you 'phone for the car before you left Liverpool Street."

"I joined the train at Ilford, and hadn't a chance of a telephone. The fly was all right. I told Truefitt to bring a cup for me here, and some sandwiches, but I think I'll change my mind, and have it upstairs. Tell him, will you, to fetch it up to the boudoir."

"I'd like you to stop here, Joan," said Campion, who, recovering himself, bent his eyes with very real concern on his wife's face. "Isn't the hatchet going to be buried yet?"

She laughed drearily, because she must do something and the thing she wanted most to do was not permissible. She longed to stride up to him, and take him by the throat, and call him liar, betrayer, and coward, to his face. But in polite society in the twentieth century such things are not done. Primeval passions belong to the primeval age. But Joan at the moment was nothing but primeval woman, longing to fight and desperately foil her mate. The reason why she dared not linger in that room was because she was afraid that primeval passion might get the better of her.

"The hatchet? Not yet. The position hasn't altered, has it?" she asked flippantly. "I wanted

to come down to-night, though precisely why, I don't know. Oh, yes, I remember we had another fiasco meeting arising out of the Crayham incident, and as I happened to be within distance of Ilford Station, it occurred to me that I might as well sleep at home. I won't disturb you, Dick. I'll just say good-night."

She went without so much as offering to shake hands. Campion made no attempt either to detain or to follow her. Her cool aloofness, so different from the old sweet passion, did not at the moment so much disturb him as the whirling chaos of his own thoughts. He had had a scorching experience in the last half hour, an experience such as few men can pass through quite unscathed.

A pretty and attractive woman had thrown herself on his mercy, declaring her love, offering him the full sympathy which had been denied him by his own wife. And though he was loyal to Joan with every fibre of his being, the ordeal had shaken him. Poor lonely, pretty Jessy Devine, with no outlet for her heart's affection, quick to see the injustice of the position into which Joan had thrust him, no man could have been less than tender to such an one! Campion, clean-souled, and absolutely loyal, had not wavered, had not spoken a word which Joan might not have heard, but the thing had shaken him. He had not recovered yet, for it was not ten minutes since Jessy in a wild abandonment of weeping had fled from the room.

The thought that Joan could possibly suspect or surmise anything did not occur; her manner was just as it had been when they had parted coolly nearly a fortnight ago. But Campion was wretchedly uncomfortable.

For more than thirty years he had lived outside the tangle of feminine affairs, but in the last year surely he had had his share!

At this moment he was under one roof with two women who loved him, and none could foresee the end.

When Joan closed the door, he walked to the cupboard in the wall, and took a stiff brandy and soda. Then he sat down to think and to smoke desperately.

Joan went straight to her boudoir and began quietly to put down her things. The colour was still high in her cheeks and her brows were a little drawn, but she was otherwise perfectly calm. The man who brought her tea noticed nothing amiss. She thanked him in her usual courteous voice, and told him none of them need wait up, that the tray could be left till morning, and that she would not even need the services of Rowley.

"Tell her," she added as an after-thought, when the man was about to close the door, "that probably Mr. Campion and I will be sitting late."

"Very well, Ma'am," said the man respectfully. "Good-night."

Joan poured out a cup of tea very strong, and

drank it without sugar or milk; the sandwiches she did not touch.

Then she took off her hat and standing before the pretty old gilt Chippendale mirror in an alcove of the wall, surveyed herself.

A little mocking smile curved her lips, for there was nothing there to depress or alarm. She knew that she had never looked better, that she was a splendidly handsome woman, but her joy in herself was cheapened. The only person for whom she cared to be desirable or fair had tired of her, and had consoled himself with someone else.

Presently she opened the boudoir door and listened, but the house was as silent as the grave. Somewhere in remote regions a door banged, she supposed it was the servants closing up. They ascended to their own quarters by a different stair, and she had no fear of seeing or of being seen by any of them. She sped along the passage, went up a short flight of six steps to a narrow landing, where there were two doors. She opened the first one, and walked in without knocking. It was her cousin's room. It was fully lighted, and Jessy was brushing out her long hair, which lay in waves above the soft blue silk of the embroidered kimono which had been one of Joan's many gifts.

She turned round in swift surprise, and the colour flushed redly where the tears were still wet on her cheeks. At sight of Joan she went as pale as death, and a strange, wicked, bitter thought

crept into Joan's heart like a poisonous asp, suggesting that perhaps Jessy had expected the master of Pennons, instead of the mistress.

"Why Joan, Joan!" cried Jessy, with a queer, breathless cackle. "Wherever have you sprung from?"

"I have come from my boudoir at this particular moment, but I have been in other places," answered Joan, as she closed the door and stood with her back against it, looking straight in front of her at her cousin's face.

Jessy, not alarmed at first, began to feel that stony stare permeating her whole being.

"What is the matter with you, Joan? Why do you look at me like that? Have you only just come down from London? Has any fresh disaster happened there? Have you been obliged to run away?"

Still Joan did not speak, and Jessy, aware that something had happened which was going to concern her intimately, laid down her hair-brush and stood rather defiantly waiting.

"Whatever is the matter with you, Joan? Can't you speak?"

"Yes, I can speak. I was just trying to gauge something before I committed myself, but I find it is beyond me. I have come to tell you that I saw you and Dick in the library about half an hour ago."

"We sit there most evenings, of course. I have

been helping him with electioneering work, the work you ought to have been doing, Joan," said Jessy, with a steel-like quality in her voice.

Joan elected not to notice these words.

"I don't wish to enter into things, Jessy, for I know now that you would lie to me as you have often lied, though I have tried to believe in you all these years, and often in spite of my better judgment."

Jessy Devine made no answer, for her small, mean soul shrank before the sad depths of reproach in Joan's eyes.

"For whatever has happened, Joan, you may blame yourself," she said hardly. "You have behaved both like a baby and a fool. How often have I warned you in the last year? You cannot deny that I *have* warned you and begged you to chuck everything, and do your duty here."

"Oh, yes," said Joan, with an odd little smile. "But I did not realize that you were warning me against yourself."

"I wasn't," said Jessy hotly, "I was warning you against the ordinary hazards of the situation. Heavens, you have behaved like a schoolgirl without knowledge of the world, you, who lived seven years with Guy Delorme, and knew what men are!"

Joan looked the ineffable disgust she felt.

"I have often listened to your strictures on men, Jessy, but I know now that they are less to blame

than some women. You can't look me in the face and say you have been blameless in this house."

"No, I can't, and I'm not going to," answered Jessy coolly, as she threw back a long strand of her glorious hair. "I did my duty so far as I thought fit. I have slaved and worked and stood up for you, Joan; but nothing, not even the tragedies of life, seem big enough to arrest you in your colossal pig-headed folly."

"I loved my husband, and he loved me until you intervened!"

Jessy shrugged her shoulders.

"Love! You don't begin to know the meaning of it. You and your sort are too cold-blooded to mate with men. I will tell you the truth. I love Dick Campion. I have loved him since the first moment I saw him, but he did not know it until to-night."

"You had no right to come under his roof if you felt like that; if you had been loyal to me, you never would have come."

Once more Jessy shrugged her white shoulders.

"Oh you—you pink-and-white plaster saint, you are unthinkable! What do you know of love, of the passion that can make a heaven of hell? I tell you you have never lived, nor could you teach a man to live. He has been very patient, he has done his best but—but——"

"It is my husband you are talking about, Jessy, he belongs to me."

"A man belongs to the woman who can keep him," came the merciless retort. "It is not your sort, who reserve your enthusiasms for votes for women that will ever keep a man. It was the same with Guy Delorme; he has often discussed the situation with me. It has been my fate—or shall I say my privilege?—to play foil and counterfoil to you in your relations with men. If I had been Guy Delorme's wife I promise you there would have been no flirtations, no delicious intimacies with women patients, no platonic friendships; I would have kept him from straying. You have had two husbands, Joan Campion, and you've lost them both. I could teach you the very alphabet of 'the game.'"

There was something so cold-blooded and vindictive in these words, spoken with the mask off, that Joan's pure soul recoiled in acute disgust. But almost immediately she recovered her dignity and self-possession.

"I think you must be either mad or a far more wicked woman than I ever imagined could exist," she said wearily. "Have you no feelings of gratitude or decency? You know what I took you from, Jessy."

"I don't forget anything. I was grateful, but I'm neither blind, nor deaf, nor devoid of feeling. And somebody had got to be kind to Dick, who has been so kind to every one of us."

Joan, thus stung, grasped the handle of the

door. So incontrollable for a moment was her righteous passion that she dared not trust her voice.

"Listen, Jessy," she said at last, and her voice was very, very quiet and cold. "You will busy yourself to-night packing up your things, and I require you to leave this house to-morrow morning. The motor will be at the door at eight, and I will instruct the servants about your breakfast and your departure."

"And if I refuse? After all, it is Dick Campion's house, and I am here on his invitation and by his goodness."

"I think you will not refuse, Jessy. If you do, I shall be under the painful necessity of—of seeing that you do go, perhaps in a little less dignified way."

"But do you think that will end everything?" asked the mocking voice.

"As to that, I don't know. But at least, now I know what you are, I will not suffer you another day under this roof. There is only one thing more. Whatever may be the outcome of this horrible affair, understand that my views on certain questions have undergone no change. I will not leave Dick. Whatever happens, I will remain his wife by law, as I remained wife to Guy Delorme, because it is the only way whereby such men can be prevented breaking another woman's heart."

Jessy shrugged her shoulders contemptuously,

and with a red spot burning on either cheek-turned to continue her hair-dressing. She was cowed into silence by the majesty of Joan's look and bearing, cowed, and a little afraid. She knew that she would have to obey and she was sorry, dreadfully sorry. For in common with the rest of her species she loved the good things of life, rich food, soft beds, pretty raiment, all the luxurious comfort of a house like Pennons, and her soul revolted at the thought of the bare cubicles and the spare dinner-table of a certain Nurses' Corporation with which she used to be familiar, and which would be her probable destination.

She was twenty-nine years of age, and she had successfully engineered a good few intrigues, some of them in the homes to which she had been sent on professional duty; she told herself this was the clumsiest of them all.

She had showed her hand too soon, and too freely. She had not made the impression she desired on Campion, and she knew that Joan would never extend the hand of friendship to her again.

In a foolish moment she had burned all her boats, and nothing but the yawning grey sea lay in front.

Joan closed the door, walked steadily back to her own room, and sat down for a moment. One word rang its insistent and ghastly changes in her ears. What was it? The Home-breakers!

Once at an open meeting at Walham Green, a

hostile voice had hurled the word at her and her comrades in the very midst of an impassioned appeal concerning the deepest interests of the home which were going to be safeguarded by the women's vote.

But what power on earth could safeguard any home or any woman's heart against a power so terrific, so insidious as a woman like Jessy Devine who had sold herself into the service of the Devil?

CHAPTER XIX

THE WIDENING GULF

BY degrees Campion's nerves settled, and when he had come to the end of his pipe his brain was perfectly clear.

His conclusion was the one to which Joan had at once arrived. Jessy must go. But how to get her away from Pennons without rousing Joan's suspicions? That was the tough problem in front of Campion, who, though a clever man, was not a schemer. In all his life, up till now, he had had nothing to hide. His cheek reddened again as the memory of Jessy Devine's impassioned face, uplifted from the arm of his chair, swept upon his memory. It was hateful. He wished wholeheartedly that he had never seen it thus, for it was a memory he would find it difficult to put behind him.

But she must leave Pennons! He would take an early opportunity of seeing her next day, and explain very kindly, but quite firmly, that she must go, that for all their sakes it was absolutely necessary that she should go clean out of their

lives. He would be kind and reasonable, he might even help her in any way open to him, but there should be no shilly-shallying. He would put it out of her power to repeat such a scene. His common sense warned him that a repetition would be dangerous.

He, more generous than Joan, because less shrewd, absolved her from the base ingratitude of her behaviour in the house where she had received so much kindness, and towards the woman who had lifted her out of a very tight place and shared her abundance with her.

He believed her sincere in her liking for him, and it even comforted him and reassured him a little in his attitude towards his own wife.

Jessy was a clever and perfectly reasonable woman, devoted to Joan, yet she was in no doubt as to the injustice of the situation! She had offered him a sympathy so insidious and so sweet that it had stolen into his soul and warped his better judgment. Women like her are doing the same thing all the world over every day. They are the true home-breakers, though beyond the operation of the law.

About midnight Campion went upstairs. His dressing-room was separated from his wife's bedroom by her boudoir, though there was also a door on the other side. The suite was complete, and in it they had often felt themselves as remote from the rest of the household as if they had been

in a separate dwelling. In spite of the coolness which had been between them he would have ventured to his wife's door that night except for the memory of Jessy Devine. Somehow he felt that he had not the right.

Joan did not hear him come up, and contrary to her own expectation, she had some hours of refreshing sleep before the dawn.

But she was early astir, alert, relentless, fully determined that her orders of the previous night should be carried through.

She rang for Rowley at a quarter to seven, and sent her to see whether Miss Devine had been awakened.

"Yes'm, she seems to be packing, Ma'am," said Rowley, with a curious sniff.

Now it must be explained that Rowley hated Miss Devine with a mortal hatred, and in her mistress's absence had watched her like a serpent.

But she had never discussed her with the other servants, nor so much as hinted at her suspicions. Joan had the wonderful power of exacting implicit loyalty as well as affection from those in her employment, and she was adored by the whole staff at Pennons, both indoors and out. Jessy had been her only error of judgment, an error, however, only possible to a large and generous soul.

"She *is* packing. She wished to be called early, she is travelling by the eight-twenty train. Has Baffin had his orders about the car?"

"Not yet, Ma'am. Is Miss Devine leaving for good, Ma'am?"

"Then see that he has them, to be round here by eight o'clock sharp," said Mrs. Campion, choosing to ignore the question. "And tell them to send Miss Devine's breakfast up to the schoolroom. I will see her there before she goes. When you have done all that, come back and do my hair."

Mrs. Campion was particular about her toilet that morning. Rowley never remembered her so fastidious. She changed her dressing-gown before she went to the schoolroom and put on a beautiful wrap of white silk, in which she looked very stately and cold. After Rowley left her she was busy for a few moments at her bureau, in the boudoir, and when she proceeded to the schoolroom she was carrying a small hand-bag slung by an antique silver chain on her arm.

In the schoolroom Jessy Devine, in her nurse's bonnet and cloak, was leisurely partaking of her breakfast.

She looked up at her cousin's entrance and gave her a cool nod. "Come to see the last of me," she said, smiling inscrutably. "You're a queer fish, Joan, upon my honour you are."

"Have you any money?" asked Joan quietly.

"A little, but I shall need all I can get. I'm going back to the Corporation."

"I don't wish to know where you are going," said Joan coolly. "There are twenty pounds so

that you can be independent for a few weeks until you find other employment."

"That will not be difficult, happily for me," said Jessy, as she drank the last mouthful of her tea. "I am a good nurse."

She took the notes quite quietly from the edge of the table where Joan had laid them down and stuffed them into her shabby châtelaine bag without so much as a word of thanks.

"So I suppose this is 'Finis' between you and me, Joan. You think you've made a cure, but, my dear, you'll need to go deeper down and find the real root before you strike again. That's Baffin, I think, well good-bye."

She seemed inclined to offer her hand, but something in the erect, forbidding coldness of her cousin's demeanour restrained her.

She passed out, flitted down the stairs, and climbed into the waiting car without a backward glance. Joan watched the car gliding down the avenue from the schoolroom window, and a strange, dry sob broke in her throat. She was not sorry to let her cousin go, but it was a lurid commentary on her championship of the woman's cause that the one towards whom she had played a sister's part should have played her false.

Campion was awakened by the starting of the motor from the door, and pushing himself up on his elbow, looked quickly at the carriage clock on the mantelpiece. It was just eight o'clock, and

imagining that he had been dreaming, he rang for his shaving water and said nothing about it.

"Tell Baffin that I won't go up till the ten-thirty this morning," he told the man, and proceeded to dress leisurely, not less troubled about the event of the last night than he had been before he slept.

He shrank, none knew with what loathing, from the thought of sitting down at the table with Joan and Jessy Devine, and yet to breakfast alone would certainly arouse all Joan's suspicions. He was surprised when the gong did not sound at the usual time, and presently from the other side of the door—Joan's side—her voice followed upon a slight knock.

"Please come into the boudoir when you are ready, Dick. Breakfast is here."

He answered by opening the door and facing her. She was fully dressed and her face, though it had lost its high bloom, bore the impress of a lofty seriousness.

Her manner was remote, forbidding the idea of intimacy even in that sanctum where they had spent so many intimate hours.

He looked slightly confused, as if unable to grasp the situation.

"Why this?" he asked. "Are you going back to town? I told them I shouldn't go up myself until the later train."

"I am going up presently," she answered, as she turned towards the table, for at sight of his dear

face something swept over her which was like a sense of irreparable loss.

"Perhaps we had better eat. They have only brought tea. Shall I ring for coffee?"

"No, thanks, tea will do. I haven't had any this morning yet."

He drew in his chair, as she had taken hers, and they began the farce of eating. But at the second mouthful, Joan laid down her morsel of toast.

"Dick," she said quietly, realizing how much easier it would have been to have endured this painful interview in the heat of the night before, "I have sent her away."

There was something pathetic in the bald words, and nothing more remote from the attitude of the outraged wife could have been imagined than Joan's manner at the moment.

Instantly the blood mounted high to Campion's brow; he was completely innocent, but that erroneous and misleading sign of guilt often complicates life for the innocent.

"I don't know what you mean," he said stupidly. "Who has been sent away?"

It was the worst possible thing he could have said, and the softness died out of his wife's eyes.

"I saw you last night in the library at the—at the—critical moment," she said hardly. "It isn't any use denying anything, Dick; Jessy didn't."

Campion pushed back his chair, fully aware now

of the difficult hole into which a foolish woman had pushed him.

"Whatever Jessy may have said on that head, if it implied that I have been false to you with her, it is a lie, Joan, and you ought to know it."

"I had the evidence of my eyes," she answered wearily. "And of my senses as well. Jessy may be what she likes—I know now that I have been miserably mistaken in her all along, but there is no woman who surrenders like that without encouragement."

"I don't of course know what you saw," said Campion, and his voice had a strange, wrung note in it, "I will try to tell you exactly what happened. I had had a trying day in town, and when I got down I missed you most frightfully. Don't sneer, I am trying to tell you the truth. Hang it all, I am an ordinary living, breathing man, and need more than meat and drink to sustain life. There was some worry here connected with the election. I told Jessy about it, I admit that I grumbled a bit, though I swear to you I did not say a word you could not have heard. I thought she looked at me queerly, and all of a sudden without the slightest warning she was on her knees at my side crying, and saying things she ought not to have said, and which, God knows, I was sorry enough to hear. That is what you saw, that and no more, and I swear to you before God that I have not betrayed you

with Jessy Devine. Good God, the mere suggestion is unthinkable ! "

Campion spoke quite quietly, and with an air of conviction which went home.

" Jessy had a different story," said Joan with difficulty.

Campion hesitated a moment. He was only an average man, but his code of honour was high ; even to save or screen himself he would not besmirch a woman's name. But now he knew Jessy Devine for what she was, his soul was sick of the memory of her face, the mere mention of her name.

" You must know I can't discuss her with you, Joan. I repeat it, before God I haven't done wrong or even thought it. Foolish I may have been, not to realize the danger and flee it, but hang it all, it was a danger you left me to face by myself. There is no getting away from that fact. Now what are we going to do ? "

" I don't know. Hadn't we better get on with our breakfast ? "

" What I want to know, Joan, is whether it is to be my word or hers that's to settle the case. I've told you the truth. More I can't do, though I would give my right hand if it hadn't happened."

Joan broke off another morsel of toast and crumbled it in her lips.

" Your tea is getting cold, Dick."

He made no answer, regarding her steadily.

He didn't know this Joan, this hard-eyed

woman, all nerves and yet all steel, and his patience was wearing out.

"What is it to be then, Joan? Is our happiness finally at an end?"

At this critical juncture, Campion made a mistake common enough among men who don't understand women. He was deceived by her ominous quiet, which he took for lack of feeling. If he had but crushed her in his arms and sworn to keep and hold her at any price, and against all odds, the strain would have been at an end at once and for ever.

But he was afraid; he felt himself in front of a judge who was not inclined to show him any mercy. The place, the hour, and the woman, all were unpropitious.

"Happiness!" she echoed in a still, small voice. "There is none; there never has been any for woman since the world began. Suffering, heartache, disillusionment are her portion and likely to be till the world is done."

"We have our share," said Campion curtly. "But this is outside the issue. What is it to be? Are you coming back to the place you ought never to have left? Will you bury everything and let us have a decent chance? We never have had, Joan, and after all we are but common people, bound by common laws and feelings. Let's get down to elementary things, and begin again."

It was his judicial tone he used, and Joan's heart was quickly wounded.

" It is no use talking, Dick, I see. We had better finish our breakfast, and begin to think of the work of the day."

" I've had all I want, and more than I bargained for ! " cried Campion, and flung himself out of the room.

Half an hour later the hoot of the motor told her he had gone.

So this foolish couple, like many another, lost their chance of reconcilement, and the gulf widened steadily.

Left to herself, Joan became a prey to the worst fears which can beset a woman's heart. Of course he had gone back to Jessy, and all was over in her life, once more. All but the Cause ! Thank God, that was left, and she could dedicate the poor remnant absolutely to it. The heart shorn of its personal happiness, could consecrate itself with new and holy fire to the regeneration of the world.

But even as the white flame of an enthusiasm which had been momentarily stayed leaped in her heart, there was driven home anew, a dull sense of personal loss, and of the awful futility of the struggle.

However, devoted, self-sacrificing, single-hearted she and others might be in this struggle for freedom and a nobler, sweeter outlook for all the womanhood of the land, the forces they had to fight against were such as could sweep all their effort aside like

the waves of a mighty sea. She was a good woman, a clever woman, a woman of high ideals and noble purpose, but the other kind of woman, sly, wicked, unprincipled, had triumphed in her very own life, stormed her intimate citadel, stolen that which she had most dearly prized. Dick alone could not be blamed for that. The woman tempted me! How get away from that old, immutable decree?

It was a very weary, disheartened woman who journeyed back to London later in the day. In the empty compartment in which she found herself she took G. D.'s letter from her dispatch-case, read it through once more, and with bitter tears in her eyes, tore it to atoms, and cast them out of the window. She must write to him, but not yet.

It would be a difficult task, for where was she to find words wherewith to answer his impassioned appeal? Poor G. D., to whom the break-up of Pennons would be such an unspeakable calamity!

Observe how far her imagination had travelled. The break-up of Pennons! were the words which occurred. In his chambers Dick Campion, though not less miserable, had not travelled quite so far. He had no intention of breaking up either his home or his married life. In the brief intervals of leisure from his day's work, he thought of every conceivable way out of the horrible tangle into which his life had run. He blamed the Suffrage first, and the Suffrage last, the Suffrage all through. He was

certain that if it were possible by some drastic measure to cut Joan off from the thing which was draining her energies and perverting her outlook upon life, if, in a word, he could get sole possession of her, and turn all her interests into her home and his, why, then, their happiness would be restored.

The thought of finally losing her never once occurred, he took it far less seriously than Joan, and though he loathed the whole situation, he did not consider it by any means irretrievable.

With his thoughts of Jessy Devine there mingled an odd desire to know what actually had passed between her and Joan, and what she had said to implicate him so deeply. He decided that it would be necessary for him to see her again, and wrest the truth from her. She must be made to understand that she could not play fast and loose with other people's lives in such fashion.

This conviction grew upon him, and he was on the point of writing to her when on the third day he received a note from her couched in these terms :

" Nurses' Corporation, Latimer Place, S.W.

" DEAR MR. CAMPION,

" I am sorry to trouble you, but could I see you for a few minutes on a purely business matter ? I am sure you would not like me to call at your chambers, and I don't wish to do so. There is no convenience for an interview here. I

have been offered a very good post, likely to be permanent, abroad, in Buenos Ayres in fact, and there is a little legal difficulty which perhaps you would be so kind as to settle for me. Please be so good as to meet me at the Hut Tea-room in Regent Street to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock. I won't keep you more than five or ten minutes.

"Yours sincerely,

"JESSY DEVINE."

Campion did not hesitate. It was the opportunity he wished, and in a public tea-room they would be perfectly safe. He replied by wire that he would keep the appointment.

Luck was against him right through. For next afternoon, as it happened, Joan coming out of a shop in Regent Street about half-past five, saw them leave the tea-room together. She stepped back into the shop without being seen, and the proprietor, observing her deadly paleness, hastened to place a chair for her and to offer some stimulant.

The interview had been brief, and so far satisfactory that it had been confined entirely to Jessy's future. When he saw her, Campion realized that the thing he had desired, namely, to hear her version of the interview between her and his wife, was altogether impossible. Joan's name was not so much as mentioned, and they parted as if they had been the merest casual acquaintances. As Jessy was about to step into her omnibus to go out

to Bayswater, where her new employer lived, she said just one thing.

"I told Joan she was a fool, Dick. It is you who have got to rub it in!"

When Campion got back to his chambers, he found Giffard there, and greeted him joyously.

"What ho, Sir Edward Giffard," he said in bantering reference to the newly-gazetted honour. "I've been wondering whether common folk are too small fry for you now."

"Stow it," said Giffard shyly as a boy convicted of some fault he could not help committing. "I've looked you up ever so often, and I've never found you in. Query, Is a popular barrister ever to be found in chambers?"

Campion laughed too, and they sat down together to have a friendly smoke. And presently Campion discovered that the thing he most needed in the world was the advice of a candid friend.

CHAPTER XX

LOVE TRIUMPHANT

ON Derby Day, from the stand where he was with Mortlake and his party, Giffard was a horrified, but not a surprised, witness of what the Militants called the second martyrdom for the Cause.

He saw the woman rush from nowhere, and throw herself, as it seemed, deliberately in front of the King's horse; the uproar which followed informed them all what had happened. It threw an undoubted gloom over that particular party, and when Giffard saw the lady by his side trembling and in tears, he supposed that she must be one of the sympathizers.

"Oh, no. I'm not one of them. I belong to the law-abiding section," she answered in reply to the word of sympathy which Giffard found it impossible not to speak. "I can appreciate the motive, though I deplore the act. I knew Emily Davidson well, and loved her."

The woman who spoke these words was one of the flowers of the fashionable world, an exquisite creature gowned by Paquin, and wearing her

beautiful raiment with grace and distinction, but she too was in the fold!

"It's extraordinary!" he muttered, and she was arrested by the exclamation which so obviously covered something deeper.

"What is, Sir Edward?" she asked, and he started slightly, not yet used to his title.

But he answered frankly as was his wont.

"I was only amazed as I have been continuously since I returned to England at the ramifications of this Movement. No class or section of society seems to be immune."

"It is a world's Movement, and people are beginning to realize it," she said quietly. "The terrible thing that has happened to-day, all the terrible things which are happening daily, are merely the excrescences. The root is deep in the heart of awakened womanhood. Oh, I wonder what has happened! Do you think you could find out for me whether poor Emily Davidson has really given her life, a foolish and unnecessary sacrifice, and one I should never be capable of for any Cause, but it shows the fibre, and it will make the scoffers think."

Giffard went down and mingled with the crowd, returning after a time to tell Lady Castleton that she was not dead, and had been borne off to the nearest hospital. The jockey, who had been thrown with the horse, they did not think seriously hurt.

Giffard dined that night after the race at

Mortlake's house at Queen Anne's Gate, where the frenzied action of Emily Davidson was one of the chief topics of conversation. Giffard, thus permitted behind the official scenes, realized as he had done at Godalming, that the Cause of the women was one of the most serious problems harassing a weary Government, almost at the end of its resources.

The state of politics in England, both home and foreign, depressed him profoundly, and he was confirmed in all his conservative leanings and felt thankful that he was practically out of it all.

His own affairs were hanging in the balance. He had been offered the choice of two Colonial appointments, one promising ease and rest and high remuneration, the other the governorship of a remote dependency, offering a considerable share of pioneer work. He was hesitating between these two and his answer was due on the fourth of June. It was at this juncture that Giffard felt anew that acute sense of personal loneliness which had been his constant companion during the two months of his sojourn in England.

He had not the smallest desire to consult Elinor, and yet it seemed his only course. As he rode out on the top of a motor omnibus to Marylebone Road the morning after Derby Day, he determined to make one more appeal to her, to ask her to help him to his decision, and then to accompany him to his new sphere. Something within informed

him that it would be a futile appeal, but the fates decreed that it should never be made.

It was about twelve o'clock when he climbed the now familiar stair in Dorrington Mansions and knocked at the door, the board in the hall having informed him that the inmates of number nineteen were in.

It was Miss Desmond who opened the door. She had on her hat and a pretty frock of green Irish linen, very fresh and simple, which suited her to perfection. Her colour heightened a little as she bade him good-morning.

"I'm so sorry Elinor has just gone to the Office, and I am *en route* for the studio. But do come in."

He seemed to hesitate.

"I wanted particularly to see Elinor, but I'm not going back to that place," he said rather sourly.

"I don't think you'd get in anyway, for they will be sitting in conclave on what happened yesterday at Epsom. I suppose you've heard?"

"I was there and saw it," he answered grimly.

Her eyes dilated with a kind of excitement.

"Were you really, and are the newspaper reports not exaggerated then? Can you tell me all about it?"

"There are really no details. While the race was near the finish, a woman ran out in front of the horse and threw him and his rider. That is all that happened."

She shivered and drew in her lips.

"Oh, it is quite horrible; poor, poor Emily Davidson, we all loved her!"

"She wasn't mad then?"

"Oh, no, only obsessed by the Cause. She isn't the only one who is without fear of death. But I hope she won't die. It would be a most frightful calamity viewed from every standpoint. But you are still standing on the mat, Mr. Giffard, I mean Sir Edward—I haven't seen you to congratulate you, but I do you know, and Elinor is most frightfully proud of it."

"Is she? She hasn't evinced much sign of it. I won't come in, thank you, but I am wondering whether you would take me to the studio. I should like to see some of your work, and the place where it is done."

"Oh, I shall be charmed to take you, though I assure you it is a howling wilderness, as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. I'm quite ready, so let us go."

They went out together, and Giffard hailed the first available taxi-cab and helped her in. It was a very short drive indeed to St. John's Wood, too short for both. From her little wrought-leather bag, Louie produced a formidable-looking key, with which she unlocked her studio door, and stood aside for him to enter. It was a long, narrow place, with a high, cold north window, very bare and workmanlike, and Giffard glanced round it with an interest largely tinged with compassion.

A few sketches were on the walls, some cheap rugs on the floor, and the usual appurtenances of the artist's craft were visible, but there was no suggestion of opulence, or even of decent working comfort.

"A little hole, you are thinking, Sir Edward!" she said, swift to read his expression. "But I assure you I've had heaps of happy hours here, and done some quite decent work. It seems back in the dark ages now! I haven't a thing to show you, and you such a likely purchaser, rolling in wealth and with nobody to spend it on!" she added with a delightful Irish touch. "Say, I have an idea! Won't you sit for your portrait? I would put my very best work into it, and when my portrait of Sir Edward Giffard, K.C.B., is hung next spring, it will bring no end of grist to the mill. Honestly, I do need it, Mr. Giffard," she said, omitting the title in her confusion at the oddness of his looks.

"I only wish I could," he answered. "I can't imagine anything more delightful than spending my mornings here in such company. But I fear I'm under marching orders again. Why didn't you think of it sooner?"

"Well, you see, I didn't think of it, I've been too busy with other things. Are you really going abroad again, and does Elinor know?"

"She does not; that was my errand to her this morning. May I tell you instead, and ask you to pass it on, as she has no time to spare for me?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, but don't be hard on her. She really does care, Sir Edward."

"Doubtful. I have choice of two appointments. Won't you sit down and let me tell you about it all?"

"Of course. We'll both sit down; how frightfully interesting, far more interesting than the resurrection of old ideals I was going to attempt this morning."

She sat down on an old oak chest which had cushions and rugs spread on it, and was used as a settee, and Giffard drew a fifteenth-century chair, the studio's one treasure, in front of her, and began to talk. The light from the north window lay bright and cold on the child-woman's face, showing up its clear, fine lines, its little wistful smile, and the pathetic pools of her big Irish eyes.

"They've offered me two things; one, I suppose, may be called a plum, promising ease and cotton-wool, and a handsome salary. Other men have done the work before me, and I shall only be called to administer what they have planned."

"And the other?" said Louie breathlessly.

"The other has points which resemble Lotali. The work would be largely pioneer. The man who was there before has muddled things, some of his mistakes will take a lifetime to put right."

"Oh, go there, Sir Edward!" cried Louie, clasping her small hands together in a kind of ecstasy. "Anybody can do the other thing. It takes a man like you to put things right."

Giffard's eyes strangely softened.

"I wish they hadn't given you a choice," she went on, in her quick, eager voice. "They ought just to have sent you to the big thing; why didn't they?"

"Well, you see," he said, with his slow, rare smile. "They realize that I had a pretty tough slice of it at Lotali."

"Oh, never mind, better a life of Lotali than Lotus-Land. Do take the pioneer work, and make things right. The world is so big and so full of mistakes, and there are so few that know how to handle mistakes without hurting people."

Before either of them realized what was happening Giffard was on one knee at her side.

"Darling, I love you!" cried the man who had scarcely before been able to carry on a conversation with a woman. "Take me and my life, and make of them what you will."

Louie Desmond drew back, half afraid, yet with such a glory in her eyes that he was answered, had he but known.

"Oh, what have I done? Have I said anything I ought not?" she cried piteously. "It is pity —I'm sure! You are sorry when you look round my poor little workshop, and know because I have told you that I am hard up. Don't do it. I'm sorry you spoke, but I won't think another thing about it. Oh, please let us go out of here and find Elinor." But the last words were spoken in a half whisper which was hidden on his breast.

* * * * * *

"What will Elinor say?" asked Louie, when they came to themselves and were articulate once more.

Giffard laughed in sheer gladness.

"I don't know. I want to hear. I want desperately to take you down now to your blessed Headquarters and tell them all that I've got in in front of the Cause."

"I was a slacker, anyway," she put in demurely. "So please don't think it has been all your doing."

"I don't mind whose doing it was, so long as I have got you. How soon can we be married?"

"Oh, not for ages. I have no clothes, and no money to get them with," she added ruefully. "I didn't even pay my share of last quarter's rent, so you know what a pauper you are going to marry. Oh, are you sure it's all right?" she broke off suddenly, and laid her small brown hand on his sleeve. "I'm nobody, a poor little Irish colleen without a farthing to her name, and no people to make her respectable, and a Suffragette to boot! Sir Edward Giffard, could you possibly have done worse for yourself? Your friends will all say no."

"I've got the woman I want," he answered, with fervour enough to satisfy her.

Then they fell into lovers' talk again, each asking the other regarding first impressions, and the gradual growth and deepening of the personal interest which had culminated in their happiness. Quite suddenly Giffard suggested that they should

go out to lunch together, and to Louie's astonishment and considerable awe, he drove her to the "Ritz," which was crammed with fashionable lunchers. She did not demur. Quick as a needle, she understood that he wished to show his world that he was not ashamed of his choice.

It was a wonderful lunch, but neither had any conception of what viands they ate, and in their little alcove they were remote enough to be able to talk intimately, and satisfy their intolerable hunger for facts about one another. Finally, at half-past three Giffard left her, because he had promised to meet a party at the House of Commons. But he arranged to come later in the evening and take her out to dinner, with Elinor, supposing that by seven o'clock she would have returned to the flat and been informed of the great news. Louie Desmond was not sorry to be alone, and declining her lover's offer of a taxi, she walked from Piccadilly Circus by way of Regent Street and the Park to Dorrington Mansions. She saw nothing of the gay throng on the pavements, nor yet of the shop windows, which were engaging their attention, her mind and heart were full. The wistful, somewhat sad little face had such a light upon it, that more than one observant eye lingered on it a trifle wonderingly. All the world was changed for Louie Desmond, and her happiness made her afraid. Not a single doubt of her lover assailed her heart, however, she had read truth and fealty in his eyes,

and her heart had leaped to meet his with all the pristine freshness which had never been tarnished by lesser loves.

Ah, they who play at love, who go through affair after affair, know nothing of that glorious passion, the one love of a life between man and woman consecrated to the best that is in them!

The wonder of it, the unutterable joy was still in Louie's eyes when she reached the flat and let herself in.

In the sitting-room, writing busily at the bureau, she found Elinor, still in her working coat and skirt, though she had laid her hat down on the floor beside her, as if she had found the weight oppressive.

"Hulloa, Lou, is that you? Wherever have you been?—putting in a strenuous day evidently. I got back about three and found no trace. Had tea?"

She wheeled round on her chair, holding her pen lightly poised in her fingers, and something in Louie's radiant face struck her.

"You look as if you had had a bit of luck, old girl," said Elinor, in her most comradely voice. "Had a good day in the studio?"

"In the studio? Oh, yes, I think so. Yes, I'm sure I had. You've had a busy morning, of course?"

"Naturally. This is rather a serious business for us, Lou—poor Emily Davidson, I mean. There is quite a difference of opinion about it in the camp."

"Have you any later news about her? Is she going to die?" asked Louie pitifully.

"They don't appear to know. She hasn't regained consciousness. But Diana Howorth recovered all right from concussion, so we are hopeful."

"Ah, that is different! She was only struck by one stone, poor Miss Davidson was trampled down; your brother saw it, Elinor."

She turned away at the moment, because in spite of her effort, the warm colour dyed her cheeks.

"You have seen him to-day, then?"

"Yes, he called just as I was going out to the studio, asking for you, of course. But he would not go to the offices."

"I could not have seen him there, as it happened," said Elinor briefly. "So he was at the Derby, and saw the thing happen? I suppose he had a good deal to say about it?"

"Not much at all," said Louie, moving about the room nervously. She was going to find it rather difficult to tell Elinor, after all, and she very nearly decided to leave the task to Giffard.

But Elinor's next question gave her an opening.

"And what happened after you told him where I was? Did you ask him whether he had anything very particular to say to me?"

"I did not, but he said he wanted to see some of my work, so we went to the studio in a taxi."

"Yes?" The tone was quite judicial, even

a little puzzled. But almost immediately Elinor's attention seemed to slacken, and her eyes swept the page she had been writing to note its effect.

She was only making talk, Louie decided, and was not really interested in the very least. A sudden desire to waken her up took possession of her.

"After we got to the studio he told me that the Government has given him the choice of two appointments abroad."

"No!" cried Elinor, now thoroughly interested. "Where are they?"

Louie laughed, a little nervous, conscious laugh.

"Now shure, and I can't be tellin' yez, for I didn't ax."

"Now, Louie, that was very naughty of you. You might try and take a little kindly interest in Ted, as I haven't got the time to spare. I am sure he has tried to be kind to you."

"Oh, he has been prodigiously kind," cried Louie, with dancing eyes.

"Was that all he told you about the appointments. Didn't he say which of them he would prefer?"

"Oh, I think he'll take the hard one, the place like Lotali, at least, I—Oh, Elinor, it's no use, I must just tell you. He has asked me to go with him, and I'm going—yes, thank God, I'm going, and I'm the happiest woman in the whole wide world."

Elinor literally stared aghast.

"Louie Desmond, what are you saying? You are going with Ted? Do you mean that you are going to marry him?"

"I think that was what he meant, but anyway I'm going," she said, then the tears began to come, not gently, or singly, but in a generous flood.

While she sobbed her heart out on a cushion, Elinor sat very still, with rather a strange expression on her face.

What were her thoughts? God only knew. She never voiced them. She only knew that they were poignant. Not yet, nor altogether, were the natural feelings of her woman's heart obliterated. She rose presently, and kneeling on the floor, put her arm round Louie's shoulder, and spoke in a low and very tender voice.

"I'm glad, Louie, do you hear? *Glad*, so glad that I forgive you for going back on us, for I know that it is the only life that will satisfy you, and it will be such a happy thing for Ted."

"But you, Elinor? It makes me feel more and more how empty and lonely life is, for oh, this is heaven!"

Elinor Giffard smiled, a slight, remote, melancholy smile.

"The few must give up, so that the many may be blessed," she said, and weeks afterwards Louie Desmond under tropical skies told that cryptic saying to her husband, and together they mourned over it, seeking in vain for its uttermost meaning.

CHAPTER XXI

G. D. INTERVENES

THE electors of the Eastern Division of Essex were early astir on a certain July day which was to decide their political fate.

It had been a very lively contest, towards which many eyes all over the country had been anxiously turned during the past few weeks.

The chances for the Government were recognized to be few.

The suffragists had made good their threat to make it a three-cornered contest, and what their Labour candidate lacked in dignity and personal standing, he made up for in vigour and earnestness. Sir Charles Barham, the Liberal candidate, a wealthy preserve and pickle manufacturer from the other side of the county, played his part with considerable ability and perfect good-humour, and was on excellent terms with Campion, who undoubtedly was the favourite.

The fun proceeded merrily. Never in the whole parliamentary history of Walden had there been such a bewildering number and variety of meetings

held within its precincts, nor more lurid posters, nor more badinage of a personal kind.

Campion surpassed the highest expectations of his supporters. His gifts of oratory, his quiet dignity, and his acute reasoning powers, trained to the finest issues by his legal experience, rendered his arguments very effective, especially when assisted by a personality at once so winning and sincere.

His electioneering campaign differed in one respect from that of other candidates, in that it was fought entirely without the aid of women. No one asked where Mrs. Campion was, because everyone knew that she had chosen to stand by the Women's Cause rather than that of her own husband. Of course she was universally blamed, except by suffragists, and her absence caused popular sympathy to flow very strongly towards Campion, who undoubtedly felt the position keenly.

But he was a model of restraint and prudence, and in all his political utterances he managed to steer clear of that particular rock on which so many of his compeers split.

His programme was full enough with the Insurance Bill, and the Land Values, and all the other controversial and burning questions of the hour.

Campion was a keen enough fighter, but he was a sad man, during these electioneering days, and frequently regretted that he had consented

to stand. He was well supported by his own men friends, and Giffard took up his abode at Pennons for the whole period of the campaign, and gave invaluable aid. On the twenty-third of July, the day of the polling, G. D. arrived at Pennons, his school having broken up a week earlier than usual owing to a threatened slight epidemic.

He arrived without having prepared them for his coming, and leaving his baggage at the station to be called for, took a leisurely stroll through the town.

It may be said here that though Joan Campion had replied to her son's letter, she had carefully ignored every point it had made, merely remarking towards the close that the things he wrote about were beyond the range of a boy's judgment or comprehension, and that while she appreciated his motive, she could not treat his intervention at all seriously.

G. D. arrived, then, unaware of the exact state of affairs between his mother and his stepfather, and full of excitement and joy at the idea of getting in at the finish. He had the most unbounded faith in Campion, and mightily scorned the idea of anybody getting ahead of him.

Surely never had a man a more loyal and loving supporter than G. D. His small bosom positively swelled with pride at the grand fight his stepfather was making. G. D. was not as yet very well known

in Walden, and he was therefore free to take his walk through the animated and excited town without being remarked upon.

"The whole show," as he expressed it, pleased him mightily.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon, and voting had been proceeding at a rapid pace all day. Every conceivable kind of vehicle was in requisition, and Campion had taken heavy toll of his friends' motor-cars for the conveyance of outside voters. In this way he undoubtedly scored, for the sympathies of the car-owning class were with him.

The town was painted red with electioneering posters. The hoary walls of the old Town House positively bristled with them. In the main they were of a harmless and inoffensive kind, and G. D. took his observations of them with considerable glee. But presently he came to one which raised his choler and caused his stubbly hair, figuratively speaking, to stand on end.

It was displayed on large boards on the backs and fronts of two particularly disreputable-looking sandwich-men parading the gutter close to the kerb in the Market Square.

G. D., amused by the picture in great red and yellow splashes representing some kind of virago holding forth from the top of a barrel, was hugely amused and delighted until his eyes had ranged themselves a little lower and grasped the letter-press.

"Electors of the Eastern Division, will you vote for a man who is avowedly unfit to represent your interests in Parliament?

"How can a man who is incapable of managing his own affairs (see above) take an intelligent interest in yours? Elect Campion and you will find yourselves committed to the worst form of Militant Suffragism.

"Avert a public scandal. Destroy a vile plot to betray the Eastern Division to the Women's Party."

G. D., whose perceptions were as sharp as a needle, squared his shoulders, set his teeth, and walking straight up to the leading sandwich-man, kicked the board both back and front.

"Say, you take off that rotten thing, or I'LL make you!"

His tone was quiet, but his eyes were blazing, and his cherubic face had gone quite white.

"W'at ho?" said number one. "S'y, Bill, air you ready for the fray?"

They both stood still, and G. D. repeated his request.

"Take off that board, and stop its lies, or I'LL put my fist into you," he said, oblivious of the fact that the men, though weedy specimens, were twice his size. With the scent for a fight which never fails, a handful of people began to gather, and quickly swelled, so that a quite respectable crowd was in a few seconds collected round those in altercation.

In the thick of it the grey Rolls-Royce, decked with the Unionist colours, came bowling up the street; in it were Campion and Giffard, who caught sight of G. D.'s face flushed like a full moon, his small figure squared in fighting trim, and apparently ready to attack somebody or something.

"Heavens, Dick, there's G. D.!" he cried. Baffin had caught sight of him too, and immediately the car swerved across the track and slowed down.

"G. D." called Campion's clear, resolute voice. "What on earth are you trying to do? Come over here this moment."

The voice acted like a charm. The boy broke through the crowd, who, realizing who the lad was, broke into hilarious and sympathetic cheers. G. D. was hauled into the car, which drew up in front of the Committee Room, into which he was presently hustled.

"You stupid little beggar, where have you sprung from? And what were you doing?"

"Doing!—it was that rotten thing about you and the Mater; I was just stuffing it down their throats, that was all. I jolly well punched a hole in the vile muck they were carrying on their backs, and if you'd given me time I'd have finished the lot."

Campion and Giffard exchanged glances, but Campion's lips twitched.

"You mustn't be so touchy, G. D. It's only

electioneering literature, to which nobody pays the slightest heed."

"I do," said G. D. rebelliously, and with his clenched fist he dashed away something from his eyes, and turned to sulk in a corner.

"Baffin had better run you up to Pennons. When had you anything to eat?" suggested Campion.

"Stodging in the train all the way; don't want anything. Is the Mater at Pennons?"

"No."

"Oh, all right! When is the poll to be declared, Pater?"

"To-night."

"What time?"

"Any time before midnight. It's the heaviest poll on record, they say."

"Oh, good! I think I'll change my mind, Pater, and get Baffin to run me up, if you can spare the car for half an hour."

"Off you go," said Campion, rather relieved. "You may come down later and see the fun."

"I'm going to," said G. D. significantly. As he passed Giffard he smiled up into his face, and gave his hand a shy pressure, and the next moment was gone.

"That kid gets on my nerves. He makes me think of his mother," said Campion nervously. "It was a bit of deuced bad luck he should get home to-day."

"I'm not so sure of that," answered Giffard. "Shouldn't wonder if G. D. has something up his sleeve."

He had.

Once on the front seat beside Baffin, he confided something to that devoted youth with which he was in entire sympathy. Instead of proceeding towards Pennons the Rolls-Royce made a considerable détour towards Seeley Junction, from which G. D. was fortunate enough to get a fast train which ran him into Liverpool Street without a stop.

At twenty minutes to seven he was running breathlessly up the stairs to the Victoria Street flat.

"The Mater in, Keziah?" he gasped, when that discreet female opened the door.

"Yes, only just come in. Wherever have you sprung from, Master Guy?"

"Never you mind," answered G. D. ruthlessly, and dashed into the sitting-room, where his mother was looking over the early edition of the *Evening Standard*, the page turned oddly enough to the column dealing with the prospects at Walden.

"Mater, get on your things," cried G. D. "You're going out with me."

Joan rose quickly. "Why, what is wrong, G. D.?" then her face paled to ghastliness. "Your father isn't ill?"

"No, Mater, though he jolly well ought to be.

I can't think why he isn't ill. It's enough to give anybody the beastly hump."

"What is?"

"The whole bally thing; but you go and get your bonnet on, and I'll tell you in the train."

"What am I going to Walden for, G. D.?" asked Joan, looking wonderingly at the boy's determined face.

"Because you've got to. Oh, I say, do be quick! We must catch the seven-thirty, as there isn't another till after nine. Can't Keziah get your stuff?"

"I won't go one foot, Guy, until I know what has happened."

"Something's got to be stopped, the beastly things they're saying about the Pater down there. I'm dead ashamed of you, Mater, and of myself, because I belong to you. You'll come down and stand by the Pater to-night, even if you go back on him to-morrow. You've jolly well got to. They've all got their women-folk to help them. He's the only one that hasn't got anybody, and it's a shame, a beastly shame! I can't stick it. Oh, do get your bonnet on, or we'll miss the train."

Joan continued to stare, but something crept into her eyes, an intolerable yearning which could not be uttered.

"I don't know what to say to you, G. D. You're beyond speaking to. But—but I'll come."

In less than half an hour they were alone

together in a compartment in the Walden train, and during their brief run into Essex, G. D. gave his mother a full, eloquent, and picturesque description of affairs as he had witnessed them. It was growing dark when they alighted at the familiar station, and taking a short cut, they presently found themselves on the fringes of the yelling and excited throng facing the Shire Hall in the Market Square.

Joan, who was perfectly familiar with electioneering procedure, surmised correctly that the counting of the votes was proceeding merrily.

"The Pater will either be in the Hall or at his Committee Rooms, G. D.," she said. "Do you know where his Committee Room is?"

"Yes, that empty shop next Beasley, the tailor's," he answered promptly.

"We'll make for that," she said, but when they reached it, they found it locked up.

Joan hesitated then, a little shy of crushing through the throng and entering the Shire Hall, on which the flashlights were now playing, the swift darkness having overtaken them.

But G. D. urged her on.

"Never mind, Mater; what's the odds? We simply must see the Pater, he's got to know you're here. I'd wriggle through myself, but I won't lose sight of you. You've got a trick of disappearing, and now I've got you so far, I'll deliver you up to the Pater somehow."

Joan smiled, but her eyes incontinently filled. She was as wax in the hands of this eager, determined schoolboy, and presently the crowd was electrified by beholding Campion's wife and her son on the steps of the Shire Hall, appearing just for a second, before the swing-doors swallowed them.

G. D., almost, but not quite triumphant, left her there for a moment and somehow managed to get a message conveyed to the inner room, where Campion and his supporters were waiting.

He came out at once, and G. D., with flushed face and eyes which dangerously shone, crept away into a dark corner of the entrance hall, but not before he had cast one imploring, significant look at his mother's face.

Campion slightly flushed at sight of his wife, stood still, waiting, and without any sign of welcome on his face. He looked like a man unsure of a situation, and waiting further development.

Joan looked at him swiftly and stepped towards him.

It was a very strange setting for such a scene, there was no privacy, not even time for explanation. But the big things of life are like that. They are seldom arranged in the limelight, which is perhaps as well for the great issues they represent.

"Dick, I'm sorry," she said, low and rather hurriedly. "I've been wrong. I haven't played the game. Forgive me, and take me back!"

G. D., not far away, overheard the words, and something seemed to thicken about his heart, so that he could hear its hammered beating. His mother had spoken, but what if the Pater should not respond? In that fearful moment G. D. seemed to grow up all of a sudden, and to step into the world of men. But when he dared to look out of his hiding and saw Campion's face, he knew that all was well.

Very, very late that night, in fact it was in the small hours, G. D. curled himself up in his bed at Pennons, too happy to sleep.

That the Pater had got in by a tremendous majority was a small affair in his eyes, in comparison with one other big and beautiful fact, that all was well between the two beings he loved best on earth.

He was just beginning to dream of the long, glorious holidays in front when someone opened the door.

"Asleep, old man?"

"No, Pater;" instantly he sat up and curled his hands round his knees, and peered with big, glowing eyes across the floor space to Campion's face.

"I thought you wouldn't be, though it's twenty minutes past one. Your mother is still talking to Giffard downstairs. But I couldn't go to bed without coming up just to say thank you. I didn't understand properly what you had done."

"Oh, stow it! I didn't do anything, only went up and fetched her from London, and, I say, Pater,

I do think really that she was jolly glad to come."

"I think so too, my boy, but that does not lessen the sum of your service. You and I have always been jolly good chums, G. D., haven't we; but now we're going to be something more, aren't we?"

"Yes, Pater," very shyly, a trifle muffled, came the answer.

"You're going to be my very own boy. You've brought your mother back, and we're never going to lose her again, G. D."

"Is she—is she going to chuck it?"

Campion nodded.

"She is going to belong to us first and foremost, anyhow, G. D., and we owe it to you. If I ever forget it, my boy—but there! I won't."

G. D., now wholly overcome, began to weep. Campion put his arm about his shoulders and kissed him tenderly.

Other sons were born to Pennons in due course, but none ever ousted G. D. from that place of high regard.

CHAPTER XXII

THE VERDICT

GIFFARD retained his quarters at Morley's Hotel the whole summer, and spent there the last night of his bachelor life.

Howorth, who had come up from Crayham to stand by him on the morrow, spent it with him. They sat rather late in Giffard's private sitting-room on the third floor, overlooking Trafalgar Square; the tide of theatre traffic had subsided and the last motor-omnibus had swept heavily home before they left the open window, where, for a couple of hours, they had been discussing most of the issues of life.

Closer acquaintance had deepened the real attachment between them, for though Howorth's intellectual powers were not on a par with Giffard's, he had other qualities of head and heart which made their appeal, and commanded both affection and respect.

Giffard recognized in John Howorth the embodiment of that great middle-class which gives solidity to the Empire. Belonging himself by right of his own particular gifts to the governing

class, he had no illusion about his power or place. He knew that, pitted against the power wielded by Howorth and his class, in any great struggle, they would be of small account. Howorth, on the other hand, whom keen application to business had not robbed of his boyish capacity for hero-worship, shared G. D.'s unbounded admiration and somewhat passionate affection for Giffard.

He was very conscious of, as well as proud of the honour Giffard had done him in claiming his services as best man, when he could have had Mortlake or another as well known for the asking. Giffard, however, felt towards John Howorth as to a brother or a cousin, and had not hesitated in his choice.

It was to be a very small, quiet wedding, a mere handful at the Marylebone Church to which Louie, in her travelling frock, would walk from Dorrington Mansions, accompanied by Elinor.

Dick Campion was to give her away, he and his wife and G. D., who had received a special invitation, would comprise the party, then there was to be a luncheon at the "Ritz," given by the Campions, a three weeks' motor honeymoon in Ireland and Scotland, then the voyage to the scene of Giffard's new activities. He was a very happy man in the prospect of having a home again after many years of loneliness. He had talked out of rather a full heart to Howorth in that hour which invited confidence, and at one o'clock he suggested that they should turn in.

"Presently, old chap," said Howorth reluctantly. "Remember that this is the last I'll see of you for a long time, it might even be for ever. What if you stop out there another twelve years?"

Giffard laughed.

"I shan't be allowed, old man. The woman will tempt me."

"And a jolly good thing too," said Howorth absently.

"And don't forget, you've promised to take a good holiday, and come out and see us. We shan't let you off that, Jack."

"Oh, I'll come fast enough," said Howorth, with a slight nervousness. "I don't propose to let you go out of my life. Say, old chappie, sit down half a moment. There's just one other thing I've got to say."

Giffard resumed his seat, and Howorth turned slightly from the open window which the flash-lights from the square made as bright as noonday; there were no lights inside the room, so that when he turned, his face was in shadow.

"Well, what is it?"

"I want to ask whether you would have any objections to my speaking to your sister?"

Giffard looked the surprise he felt.

"Speaking to her, Jack!" he repeated, in a slightly mystified tone. "Do you mean——?"

He stopped there, and Howorth filled up the blank.

"I do mean just that. I cared for her that night, I do believe, when you and she and I met

first in this very house. I've gone on caring and hoping ever since, and now I've made up my mind to speak."

Giffard was silent a moment. Then, reaching out his hand, he took Howorth's in a grip which hurt.

"Old man, if that should ever come off, I do believe I should be the happiest man alive. It would certainly be the salvation of her. But—but, I doubt it is too good to be true! Have you ever said anything? Has she any idea?"

"I have said nothing definite, but she knows. Don't you think, Ted, that women are much quicker in these things than we are? They have a sort of sixth sense."

"They might have had once, but they've used it for other things," said Giffard rather grimly. "But you think she has an idea?"

"I think she guessed it first that week-end you both spent at Crayham, and there I saw the other side of her. My mother did too. She knows I'm going to speak to her this time."

"And approves?" queried Giffard in deeper surprise.

"And approves. My mother is different from other women. There isn't an atom of meanness or jealousy in her whole composition. And though she is old-fashioned, she is just fine, right through. She can see both round and through most questions. She thinks with you that this might—might save Elinor."

Giffard shook his head.

"I doubt it is too good to be true, Jack, but go in and win. Could *I* do anything, I wonder?"

Howorth shook his head.

"Nothing, old chap. I must go this little bit of the road on my own, absolutely."

Giffard hesitated a moment.

"You're not afraid, Jack? Perhaps because you care for her in that way, you may have got some special insight into her mind, but I frankly confess that in these months I've never seen her except obsessed by one frantic idea, and I can't imagine her obsessed by any other. She takes the thing far more seriously than Miss Desmond ever did."

"I am fully aware of that, and if—if she does me the honour to accept me, she must detach herself from the whole lot," said Howorth quite firmly. "I will not have a repetition of Besley Grange at the House by the Works."

"You're right, Jack, by God you are, but I doubt you're leading a forlorn hope. God bless and prosper you, whatever happens. If you have a happy issue to your wooing, I shall leave England a happier man than I entered it. Once she was the dearest and best, Jack, but somehow the iron has entered into her soul. She is for no half-measures anywhere. The one ray of hope I see is, that if you can make sufficient appeal, she will accept you wholly. She won't be like Campion's wife. She's made of different stuff. That is the

only crumb of comfort I have to offer you. Well, we'd better turn in, for to-morrow will be a heavy day."

But Giffard was long in sleeping. The thing Howorth had told him, so unexpected and yet wholly welcome, had given a new and active turn to his thoughts. He fell asleep at last with the dawn, praying that he might succeed.

"Norah Louise Desmond, only daughter of the late Hon. and Rev. Canon Desmond, of Ballykerry, Co. Down," (*vide Morning Post*) had a glorious day of sunshine and balmy airs for her wedding.

She and Elinor walked together, as arranged, from Dorrington Mansions to the grey old church in the Marylebone Road, and Campion received them in the porch. The whole ceremony was quickly over, and G. D., who attended his first wedding, did not think much of it as a show. But the lunch at the "Ritz" came fully up to expectations, and when he saw the couple go off in a very handsome touring car of a type fully approved, that growing expert concluded that as a wedding it had points.

The parting between Giffard and his sister was rather acute.

She clung to him a moment, and her face was working, her eyes full of the things she did not utter.

"I know you will be happy, Ted, for I know Louie and her capacity for happiness. Good-bye."

"Take a leaf from her book, then, dear," he whispered desperately. "Take it from me, it is the thing we are all out for, personal happiness,

and it is the thing that lasts when we take care of it... Don't let it go by."

She shook her head then, and the look in her eyes, to Giffard's thinking, killed Howorth's chance.

After the motor left Elinor said good-bye to the Campions rather hurriedly. A coolness had arisen between Joan and her old comrades since her surrender, but she apparently was content. She was radiant and as beautiful as a dream, striking a note of distinction, even in a place where distinguished women were plentiful. It was the middle of August now, and London was reported socially as a howling wilderness, but Parliament was sitting yet, and the luncheon-room at the "Ritz" that day was full.

Howorth did not say good-bye to Elinor with the others, he simply took up his hat and followed her out into the sunshine of Piccadilly.

"Will you give me another half-hour of your time?" he asked, as they stood just half a moment under the colonnade.

She looked at him in rather a startled way.

"I thought of walking back to the flat. You can walk with me if you like."

"Not that way. Let us go west and have tea in Kensington Gardens and see whether we can come up with Peter Pan."

She smiled faintly, and her eyes were still dangerously soft. Few women can witness the marriage of those dear to them without some inward

emotion, and Elinor was more shaken by the event than she could have imagined possible.

So they turned together, then Howorth, imagining that she looked tired, hailed a taxi and put her in. They drove to the Albert Gate, then entering the Park, walked in a slanting direction towards the Gardens. They were more deserted than usual, the majority of their devotees, the children of the rich, had already been sent to mountain or sea. Howorth had no difficulty in finding a quite remote spot under a spreading tree, where they were quite out of hearing or sight.

"It's only four o'clock. Would you like tea now, or shall we sit down for a little?"

"Oh, there is no hurry for tea after a 'Ritz' luncheon," she said lightly. "We can sit down if you like."

"You look tired," he hazarded, and could not keep the thrill of tenderness from his voice.

Elinor was fully conscious of it, and the colour fluttered fitfully in her face, which, in spite of its somewhat worn look, seemed to Howorth the most beautiful as well as the dearest in the world.

All trace of self, almost all trace of earthliness, seemed to have been purged away; it had the serene and lofty look we see on the faces of those who are inspired by the noblest purpose.

Certainly Elinor Giffard entertained the highest possible conception of the Women's Cause; to her it was a religion, nothing less.

"London can be very beautiful in summer. What city in the world could offer anything like this in its very heart?" she said presently.

"It *is* beautiful," answered Howorth, as he drew in his chair so that he faced her. When her eyes came back from following the flight of a bird in the sapphire sky and rested on his face, she knew what was coming.

"Don't," she said hurriedly. "Please don't; it isn't any use."

"I love you, Elinor. I've loved you since the first day I saw you. You are the first woman I have ever wanted, or cared to look at twice. You know what I have to offer. It is a whole-hearted devotion. Please let your heart speak. If there is one responsive chord in it, let it be heard."

Her distress was acute.

"I am so sorry, but it is quite impossible!"

"There is only one thing which makes it impossible," he said steadily. "And that, I hope, does not exist."

"Oh, there you are wrong; there are many reasons, most, if not all, of them quite insurmountable. I shall never marry. I am pledged to the Cause. I am not one of those who are keen to-day and slack to-morrow; I've given myself to it. I mean to see it through."

"Don't, Elinor! It isn't worth while. Did you see the light on Ted's face and hers at the altar to-day? That is the thing which makes life glorious."

"Spoken so like a man," she said, but her voice was very unsteady. "I don't blame you for your outlook. It is part of you and will always be, and I like you so much that I'm sorry to give you pain, but it is quite impossible."

"Why?" he persisted.

"I have told you. I will never marry. I am one of the women who has only room in her life for one thing. I have given myself to it absolutely. Ted's word 'obsessed' is the right one. There is no room in my life for you or for any man."

"I refuse to take that answer. There is only one answer I will take. If you look me in the face and say that you don't care for me, that you never could care, then I'll go away, but not unless."

It was a few seconds before she faced him, and then her face had grown as white as the chiffon at her throat.

"You try me very much. It is not quite fair. I have been frank with you, but apparently you do not believe. I do *not* care. I shall never care in that way for any man, and further, I don't mean to marry. Even when we get the victory there will be so much to do educating our women for the new rôle they are going to play. I shall be needed."

Howorth pushed back his chair and rose, for her words had the final sound.

"Then there is absolutely no hope?"

"None. I am sorry. I pray you may find

someone who will make you happy yet. Do you mind going now? No, I don't want tea. I shall just make my way back alone. I should prefer it."

He raised his hat gravely, and walked away, not offering even to touch her hand. Elinor sat quite still on the chair where he had left her, looking for a long, long time into the green heart of the gardens sacred to childhood. Here and there a mite in white fluttered against the green of the trees, the child of some happy, careless woman whose ears were closed to the call.

Elinor Giffard had suffered many things for the Cause, against some of which her whole soul had revolted. But to-day she had made the last sacrifice. She had lied for it. For she loved John Howorth, and had had the strength to send him away.

* * * * * *

Howorth walked the whole distance back to his hotel, a bitterly disappointed man. When he reached Trafalgar Square he found that an immense crowd had gathered, and that there were evidences of a disturbance of some kind. Pushing his way through the throng, he found that it was Sylvia Pankhurst on the plinth of Nelson's column, holding forth to the multitude in no dubious terms.

The small, slim creature, wholly inspired by her own zeal and fire, easily carried a section of the crowd with her.

"If you are in sympathy with us, and I see by

your faces that many of you are," she cried, "then follow me to Downing Street."

She sprang down, waving the banner of the Union, and immediately the surging crowd closed about her and began to move towards Whitehall.

Howorth, fascinated, followed in its wake. Then the police intervened and there were some ugly moments. The hostile element in the mob began to hustle the women, and he observed some of them being badly used.

One had her bonnet torn off, and the pins had come out of her hair, and her face was bleeding. Howorth sprang forward, his innate manhood prompting him to rescue a woman in distress. But the police were before him, and presently she was marched off under arrest. Then quite close behind him Howorth heard a moan of distress, and turning swiftly, saw a small, slight, elderly woman clinging closely to the arm of a shabby old man with a thin, sad face.

"Oh, Walter!" she cried, "that was our Aggie! To think we buried five and she's our last; but I wish we'd buried her too before this."

It sounded like the verdict of England's motherhood on the Women's Cause.

THE END

Printed at The Chapel River Press, Kingston, Surrey.

00095775

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 20 February, 2020